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[WITH ONE BITTER SOB POOR NELL FELL BACK SENSELESS.]

## ROYAL'S PROMISE.

### CHAPTER VII.

LORD DELAMERE read the murder of his employé in the papers, and that Sir Royal Charteris had been taken up on suspicion of the dark deed. A kind of fierce, savage joy filled his breast. If John Dalrymple had spoken truth, and poor Claude had really been killed by a Charteris, here was vengeance indeed falling on the family!

Edwin drove straight to Mr. West's office, and had an interview with that able lawyer, requesting him to send some one to "watch the case," as it is termed in legal phraseology, on behalf of himself at the forthcoming examination. Mr. West listened with deep attention; but though a lawyer—a member of the profession said to have blunted their feelings by long familiarity with painful stories—he displayed great interest in Lord Delamere's story. He was an old friend of the family, he had known Edwin from a boy,

and so, perhaps, he felt at liberty to speak plainly.

"I suppose half my fellow practitioners would be lost in admiration of your skill, Lord Delamere, but I can't congratulate you. It seems to me you have given yourself over to revenge as completely as though you were a savage chief instead of an English nobleman."

"At least I have succeeded!"

"Hardly," said the lawyer, cold. "I don't fancy your mother would like the true story of your brother's death given to the world. I feel sure she will insist that it is more honourable for him to be supposed to have died of low fever than to have been the victim of a drunken brawl. You have gratified your own malice, and brought a terrible ending upon poor John Dalrymple besides a fearful suspicion on Sir Royal Charteris, but I really don't see what else you have done!"

"I tell you my brother was foully murdered."

"Granted," replied Mr. West, with supreme calm. "Granted also that Mr. Dalrymple or Ralph Charteris killed him! What next?"

"It was Ralph Charteris!"

"Well, he has been dead for two years, and Dalrymple has followed him. I don't particularly see what results from your discovery!"

"I have it on John Dalrymple's solemn word that Ralph Charteris is alive!"

"Nonsense, my lord!"

Edwin grew angry.

"I assure you it is so. Dalrymple had gone to unearth him when he met his fate!"

"Either you are more credulous than I should suppose, or you are jesting with me, my lord!"

"Do you think I could jest on this subject?"

"Then you have been profoundly taken in. I have a relation living at Marton who was tolerably intimate with the Charteris family. He actually read the funeral service over Ralph, and has told me, over and over again, that the death of his second son broke Sir Reginald's heart. I assure you, Lord Delamere, all hopes of vengeance upon Ralph Charteris are useless. He is beyond your power!"

"But Dalrymple——"

"Told you a lie. He felt your suspicion."

were on him. He wanted to escape the reward of his crime, and so he fixed it on his friend!"

"But—"

"My dear Lord Delamere, the marriage history will show you how little he is to be trusted. In two years' time he sank—I have it on good authority—to nothing better than a card-sharper. There was not a house in London where he dared show his face. You could not take his word unless supported by the strongest testimony. Why, then, should you believe just on his bare assertion that Ralph Charteris lives?"

Edwin groaned.

"A pretty mess I have made of it."

"But the misery of your mistake has not fallen on you," returned the lawyer, gravely. "One can hardly pity John Dalrymple much. He thoroughly deserved his fate; but I cannot say I am grieved to the heart for Royal Charteris."

"I have met him abroad; he struck me then as very different from his brother."

"He was one of the noblest, most generous-minded men who ever lived. His youth was clouded by his father's preference for Ralph. The latter's sudden death, and some disgraceful stories which came out about him, had made Royal grave and sad before his time. He had but just returned to take possession of his inheritance. All Marton—say, all Hegustine, hoped to see him settled down at the Hall to a peaceful, domestic life; and now, through your cruel thirst for vengeance, his whole future is blighted."

Edwin felt a little ashamed of himself; he began to adopt Mr. West's view, and to believe John Dalrymple had been his brother's true murderer after all.

"I am very sorry," he said, lamely, "but, West, surely it's not so bad as you say; they can't kill him if he didn't do it."

"I think he did do it."

"And yet you pity him."

"Because I know the man so well by repute. I can tell so well all he suffered. His father was dead; he had come at last into his inheritance; he had the right to hope the nobility of his own life would make people forget the dark stories of his brother. He was full of hope and thankfulness that, at last, the dead past might be forgotten when this man came to him. I can imagine the whole scene; how Dalrymple, knowing he could never earn your promised reward by producing Ralph Charteris, since the grave would not give up its victim, threatened Sir Royal with publicly defaming his brother's memory unless a large sum of hush-money was forthcoming. The newspaper accounts say that when he called at the Hall high words passed between him and Sir Royal; nay, more, that the servants were called on to turn him from the house, and that he threatened the molester of his peace with summary treatment if ever he ventured on the premises again. That is the story the papers tell us, and you will see that it agrees perfectly with my version of Sir Royal's character."

"But you think he did it?"

"Who else could have done it?"

"That is negative proof."

"Well, then, suppose that, smarting from this scoundrel's insolence, Sir Royal went for a long solitary walk in his own grounds; that even here Dalrymple had the audacity to follow him. I don't defend Sir Royal, remember. Murder is never justifiable, but I can imagine that in a moment of intolerable exasperation he fired the pistol, and freed himself from a mean and sordid persecution."

"You have read the accounts?"

"Fully. There is a telegram in to-day's paper saying that Sir Royal was arrested late last night."

"I don't think he did it."

Mr. West felt perplexed.

"You know less of him than I do; you have little cause to like his family. How can you see any grounds for believing him innocent, where even I can find none?"

"It seems to me if he had wanted to make an end of Dalrymple he would have chosen some other place than the part of his grounds known by all the servants to be his favourite evening haunt."

"You forget my theory—that it was utterly unpremeditated; a moment's fury. The late Sir Reginald Charteris possessed, at times, an ungovernable temper. Calm and reserved, in usual, there were moments when he gave way to rage, almost like a maniac's."

"If he had done the deed in a moment's delirium would not his first thought have been escape? The accounts expressly say that Dr. White found him calmly smoking in his private sitting-room."

"We seem to have changed sides, Lord Delamere, and you to have espoused the cause of mercy. I own I should like to believe Sir Royal innocent, but I cannot."

"I think I shall go and see him."

"You! When you came here believing his brother had murdered yours?"

"You have shown me that theory won't hold, and that Dalrymple was the true offender. I feel, somehow, as you hinted to me, that I led to Sir Royal's being in this fearful position. I can at least do my best for him."

"Dr. White and my brother-in-law, the vicar of Marton, believe in him firmly. The worst point is that people declare there was an actual witness of the murder, and that her description of the man who fired the pistol applies tolerably to Sir Royal. On the other hand, the two servants who caught a faint glimpse of the fugitive declare it was not their master."

"Two against one."

"But the two are old family retainers, who hold the honour of the Charteris above all else; and the one is an utter stranger, a young lady working at the Sisterhood close by."

Edwin started.

"I hope it was not Nell."

"Surely you do not mean Miss Fortescue has entered a Sisterhood?"

"She is staying there for a time."

Mr. West looked stern.

"I should have thought a more congenial place might have been found, even as a temporary home for your grandfather's heiress."

"It was her own wish."

"The last time I saw your mother she told me our plan had succeeded perfectly, and that you and Miss Fortescue had arranged things to your mutual satisfaction."

"I mean to marry Nell; I have never told her so, but I mean to when she leaves the Sisterhood in September. She is eighteen only, so there is plenty of time."

"Lovers were more impatient in my time," said Mr. West, coldly. "However, the wish is yours."

"I see no wish about it. My first duty was to my brother's memory. Nell went to the Sisterhood a child of sixteen; You may be quite sure no lovers have troubled her there; and my mother would never consent to her taking the veil even if she wished it."

The lawyer shrugged his shoulders.

"Have you ever studied your grandfather's will?"

"Never. The one fact that Nell was his sole heiress was sufficient for me."

"He must have repented his cruelty at the time of her mother's marriage, for he left her as free as possible. Failing the guardian named in his will, I was to appoint another, who was to receive a certain yearly sum for Miss Fortescue's expenses. But from the age of eighteen the young lady was to be free to choose her own home, and no one's consent was required to her marriage provided that her husband was of gentle birth. For some weeks now by that will Miss Fortescue has been her own mistress."

"She does not know it."

"But surely she knows her prospects?"

"She has no idea of them."

"Well, if she chose to fancy a bank clerk,

with a pound a week for sole income, provided he came of gentle birth (and, alas! in these days that term is most elastic), she could marry him when and where she pleased."

"And the property?"

"The property is disposed of in any case. Whether she married a millionaire or a genteel pauper there would be no difference. She enjoys Delamere Court and its revenues for life. They revert to her eldest son, or, failing a son, to her daughter. If she died childless all would come to you."

"You have made me feel uneasy."

"Well, I think you have deserved it. You have not been an attentive lover by your own showing; and remember one thing, please, Lord Delamere, if Miss Fortescue takes the veil she will have full power to give her life-interest in the Delamere property to whatever community she joined. You would profit nothing till her death."

"I am hoping my next errand here may be to ask you to draw my marriage settlements," said Edwin equably. "Nell never had any objection to me. After what you have told me, I think I had better go to the Sisterhood after my call on Sir Royal, and propose to my cousin at once. I suppose the black-veiled ladies won't think it deprecation of their abode to use it for such a purpose, will they?"

"I can't say," with a smile. "As the murder was within a few yards of their grounds I should say they had had enough deprecation to last them for some time."

"Well, my mother must write and get Nell home. I daresay I seem a very mercenary wooer to you, Mr. West; but the facts, for the last two years I have never even dreamed of Nell's marrying any one but me. She seemed to come to me as a sort of legacy from Claude, and I never thought of anything but making her my wife."

"My dear Lord Delamere," observed the lawyer, with a smile, "I never called you mercenary. I merely take the liberty of observing that if one proverb cautions us against marrying in haste, another warns us that delays are dangerous. Of course, as you say, Miss Fortescue has had no chance of meeting with lovers at St. Hilda's; but if she resembles her mother she would be sure to find a great many elsewhere; so I advise you to lose no more time."

Lord Delamere went down to Blakesleigh that very day. He stopped at the hideous prison, and, sending in his card, asked to see Sir Royal Charteris. He was kept waiting some time. Dr. White and a lawyer were with the prisoner, and there seemed a doubt whether he could be admitted at all that morning. In fact, Royal had such painful associations with the name of Delamere, he would gladly have refused the visit; but James Jordred, the lawyer, who been telegraphed for the night before, was far too astute to lose any chance which might throw a ray of light over the mysterious case.

"You must see him, Sir Royal!" he said, with authority. "I have met Lord Delamere, and I assure you he is the last man in the world to come unnecessarily."

So the mandate was given, and Edwin was ushered in, both the doctor and Mr. Jordred having kindly retired. It seemed to Royal Charteris that his visitor was suffering from extreme agitation. He seemed almost afraid to touch the hand Sir Royal extended to him.

"I want to ask your pardon!" said Delamere, quickly. "I fear I am in some measure the cause of your present position."

"You! Impossible."

"I fear so," waiting for a moment's thought as to how he could explain himself without mentioning the name of Ralph Charteris. "But for me the miserable man who troubled you last Monday would never have dared to present himself at Marton. I found him on the first of last June sunk to the lowest poverty in London, even the scanty allowance he received from his brother forestalled. He professed himself anxious to go abroad, and to make a



new start. He appealed to me by his old friendship for my brother. I promised to give him a free passage to Adelaide, and help to start him in business there if he would first prove to me he had no hand in Claude's death. I don't ask what he said to you; I don't seek to know; but I feel certain he would never have disturbed your peace but for my having, as it were, believed in him and taken him from the miserable Whitechapel courts to something more approaching respectability. I assure you I regret my share in his coming here most sincerely, and I hope you will at least believe me when I say so."

Royal Charteris sighed. Twenty hours of imprisonment had made him take a far more serious view of his position than he had been inclined to ten days before. Then he deemed it rather a needless caution to silence the only direct testimony that could be given against him. Now it seemed to him that even without Miss Fortescue's voice there was ample evidence to convict him again and again.

"I believe you," he said, with the ready courtesy which never failed him; "and I thank you for the trouble you have taken in coming here to seek the pardon of one whom the world deems a murderer."

"Not the world!" corrected Delamere, pleasantly. "Why, even if all Marton thought you guilty, which I can't believe, that would be a very small corner of the world!"

"The appearances look very dark against me!" said Royal, slowly. "I have been reading the papers myself this morning, and even, I must confess, anyone seeing those accounts could come to but one conclusion."

"The best service anyone could do you would be to find the real murderer, I should say," returned Edwin, thoughtfully.

Was it fancy, or did a convulsive shiver really pass over that manly form? In a moment Sir Royal had recovered the chill feeling of fear which doubtless caused it.

"I think, Lord Delamere, the true murderer will never be discovered. Myself, I believe firmly the 'Marton murder' will be a mystery for all time."

"But then—"

"But then it will go hardly with me," said Royal, completing the sentence the other had left unfinished. "Well, I think it will. I have a firm conviction I shall never leave this place a free man."

"Nonsense! Your friends ought to scold you well for being so desponding."

"They do their best," said Royal, gravely; "the Vicar tells me over and over again that no harm can befall the innocent. Dr. White has a theory of his own, that a tramp he met in the lanes the night before must be the true criminal. Two of my own servants were in time to catch a glimpse of the man who fired the shot, but such an indistinct one, they declare they should not know him again; but then, poor fellows, they admitted that he was tall, and had dark, curling hair, which undoubtedly applies to me; while their devotion to our family is so well known, I fear the jury will not place implicit faith in their protestations. They were not near enough to retain a good impression of the man's face."

"An alibi would be your best help."

"An alibi would save my life; but it seems hard to find. I was alone in the grounds on that fatal night from half-past seven till nine. There is no doubt the murder was committed at a quarter past eight, and I distinctly remember hearing the bells ring out the curfew (an old custom in our village, which invariably happens at eight in summer and seven in winter) while I was standing at the little gate leading to the public footpath across the park, a good two miles from the scene of the murder. I stood there some minutes, for a gipsy girl came up and tried to make me have my fortune told. I gave her a shilling, but stopped to ask her some questions."

"If only she could be found!"

Royal shook his head. "Most likely she and her people moved on that very night. Then gipsies can't often

read, so she would not be likely to see the case in the papers; besides, there is a grave reason why she would object to coming forward. That very night I lost my watch!"

Lord Delamere looked surprised.

"Lost your watch! In the grounds?"

"I had been rambling in the wood. I felt thoroughly put out after my interview with Dalrymple, and I wanted to be alone. Scrambling through a thicket the fastening of my chain gave way, and my watch fell with a jerk to the ground; the glass was broken, and the hands stopped at five minutes to eight. I had been looking at the watch just as the curfew sounded. I was wondering if there was much damage done to it, as it had been a present from my father. I am positive I replaced it in my pocket before I spoke to the gipsy girl, but when I got home it was missing. If, as seems to me probable, she stole it, there is no hope of her turning up!"

"No, she would fear imprisonment; but could not she be advertised for and a free pardon—even permission to keep the watch promised if she would come here?"

Sir Royal looked the least bit more cheerful.

"The watch would be a powerful witness in my favour," he said hopefully, "for as the hands would have stopped at five minutes to eight it would bear out my statement!"

Not a word was said by Lord Delamere of the rumour he had heard that a young lady would be called as a witness who had seen the murder actually committed.

Sir Royal expressly mentioned his own servants were the witnesses whose testimony would tell most against him; and after hearing that Edwin could hardly repeat the report he had heard, which was most likely an idle invention, after an hour's interview he rose and shook Sir Royal's hand heartily.

"You are sure you forgive me my share in your troubles?"

"I am positive!" then came a feverish light into the sad, beautiful eyes. "I wish, Lord Delamere, all the forgiveness had to come from my side; but I fear in the old days, when your brother and mine were sworn companions, Ralph, as the elder, was to blame for a good deal of poor Delamere's wildness. From my father's letters I fear the name of Charteris must have had a bitter ring in your ears for the last few years, and I am glad to have met you, and told you this!"

Edwin felt strangely captivated by the rich, musical voice, the dark, beautiful eyes.

"Our brothers were friends," he said, simply. "I should like you and myself to be the same. Poor Claude paid a heavy penalty for his folly; but why should what is past cast a shadow between you and me? I should like the world to know, Sir Royal, that the names of Delamere and Charteris were linked together once again in true friendship and intimacy, this time not as mere boon companions and pleasure-seekers."

"You don't know what you ask?"

"I think I do."

"Remember the assizes are in a month's time. If I am committed for trial in five weeks, I may be a convicted felon."

Lord Delamere went away with a strange anxiety at his heart. One text of Scripture which he had wilfully disobeyed for the last two years would ring in his ears incessantly, "Vengeance is mine, and I will repay, saith the Lord."

It was a relief to leave the prison, and after a pleasant drive stood once more on the threshold of St. Hilda's; but the vaguest bewilderment was written on the face of the little portress when he asked to see Miss Fortescue.

"Miss Fortescue is not here."

"Where is she, then?"

"I don't know. She went away all in a hurry last night. Miss Ward went too. They did say," whispered the portress, with a burst of confidence in an awestruck tone, "they did say that a policeman came and fetched 'em."

"Christine, what are you chattering about?"

It was the calm, authoritative voice of the Superior. But even Sister Ida grew pale as she came forward and recognised Lord Delamere. Little Nell's cousin and guardian was the very last person she wished to see.

"This is an unexpected pleasure, Lord Delamere," she began, when Edwin had been conducted to her private room. "Miss Fortescue thought you were in America!"

"I have returned, you see. My mother will be in England next week, and it is our wish that my cousin should then return to us at her earliest convenience."

"I will tell her."

"Pardon me," said Edwin blandly; "but I will do that myself if you will kindly let me see her. The child at the door said she was not here, but that, of course, is a mistake. You could not," and he spoke very decidedly and severely, "allow a young lady entrusted to you by her friends to leave your keeping for any but their own!"

"Miss Fortescue pleased herself," said Sister Ida, coldly. "I would not keep her here against her will."

But that she was a woman Edwin would have said something more; as it was, his words, though occasionally polite, were full of bitter satire.

"Perhaps you will kindly signify to me whether Miss Fortescue's will has taken her. I must confess I should have thought you less helpless than you profess. My cousin, when she came to you, was a docile child; you must have changed her wonderfully if she has become in two short years an unmanageable young lady."

"I have done her no wrong!"

"I can neither agree with, nor differ from you, until I hear what you have done with her."

"Mrs. Delamere always gave me to understand she had the strongest objection to Helena becoming a Sister of Mercy."

"An objection I share. If you have sent Nell away to prevent her from taking the veil, madam, you have my warmest thanks."

"I understood Miss Fortescue was an orphan."

"Precisely; but even orphans have friends who like to be consulted as to their disposal. Once more, madam, may I entreat you to speak plainly. Where is my cousin?"

"At Marton Hall."

Edwin started. He at once identified Nell as the heroine of Mr. West's story, that a young lady was the strongest witness against Royal Charteris; but even then he had no idea of last night's ceremony. His conclusion was that to save Nell the unpleasant publicity of appearing as a witness she was temporarily secluded in some secret chamber of the old mansion. He knew that the Hall was several centuries old, that it belonged, in fact, to the period when every family of note had their secret hiding-place wherein to conceal friends in time of danger.

"A rash act," he said, slowly, "considering that there is no lady at Marton Hall; that its master is young and unmarried."

"Lord Delamere," said Sister Ida, utterly bewildered, for the two were at cross-purposes, "what can you mean. It would have been far worse had Sir Royal been old—or married!"

"Hardly! My cousin would then have been his wife's guest. Now I confess I hate the idea that even to save his life she is hidden in his house."

"Hidden!" exclaimed the bewildered Sister. "There is no hiding in the matter; she went there openly last night. Dr. White escorted her, and I sent another young lady to bear her company. All the servants were drawn up in state to receive her, and she took her place as Lady Charteris, quite as a matter of course."

"As what?"

"As Lady Charteris!" Then, perceiving he was still bewildered, "They were mar-

ried here last night in our chapel by special license; it was the only thing to do. Her testimony would have killed him, and only as his wife could she be spared from giving it."

"It was the only thing for him, I grant, but she was in your charge. You might have thought of her."

"I did."

"I fail to see it."

"She was an orphan whom no one wanted. Your own mother told me she was nothing but a trouble and expense to her. I have a letter now in my possession, in which Mrs. Delamere tells me that she will not hear of her niece becoming a Sister. The girl is to return to her in September, and, painful as will be the task, she shall endeavour to accomplish her marriage. Instead of indignation, Lord Delamere, I expected thanks. I have relieved your mother of the task she dreaded, and 'accomplished' Miss Fortescue's marriage without any assistance from Mrs. Delamere."

Edwin bit his lip.

"I always told my mother truth was best; that it would have been far wiser to tell you the whole story."

"What story?"

"That instead of being a portionless orphan my cousin was a great heiress. Delamere Court and its revenues are hers unconditionally, and the marriage my mother was so anxious to accomplish was one between Nell and myself. My mother is a proud woman, and she tries to hide the fact that I am really a pauper peer, and nothing in the world but a marriage with my little cousin could restore the family estates to me."

A gleam of compassion shot through the Sister's dark eyes.

"I am sorry," she said, gently. "Lord Delamere, be generous, and try to look at the matter from my point of view. To me it seemed that she was a lonely little child whom no one particularly wanted. The union might save Sir Royal's life, while as for her it gave her, so I thought, wealth and position. I knew she had cared for no one else, and he was a Charteris. He could not be unkind to any woman, much less to one who had sacrificed herself for him. At the worst, I thought of her as a wealthy widow, at the best as a good man's wife."

"I cannot blame you," said Edwin kindly, "believing her simply a burden to us. I can understand your reasoning; it is a miserable business. For her sake and his own I trust Sir Royal will come well out of it."

"And you forgive me?"

"I repeat I cannot blame you."

"Will you go to see her?"

"Whom?"

"Your cousin."

"Little Nell! Yes, I should like to see her. Happily, she has never heard of the family compact. She will not know the hopes her marriage has frustrated. I am not the least in love with her, but I honestly meant to make her happy."

Sister Ida sighed.

"I cannot fancy Nell unhappy. She seemed to me to possess the most wonderful power of making sunshine for herself. She is a dear little thing, and we all miss her."

Lord Delamere felt like the victim of some delusion as he walked up to Marton Hall. He thought of his interview with Nell in the shabby London school room, and again of their parting, and the indignation she had shown at his caress. Well, another had the right to caress her now.

The old butler received Lord Delamere with the utmost respect. Edwin gave his card, and requested to see Lady Charteris, saying she was his cousin.

"My lady is in her own room," said the old man simply. "I will ask Miss Ward if she can receive you, my lord."

He ushered the visitor to a pretty sitting-room, hung with pale blue silk; and after a few moments' suspense there came to him the prettiest of damsels, with a pair of laughing

black eyes, and the most captivating gipsy face. She looked at him a little diffidently.

"I am Nell's friend," she said frankly; "and if you are going to scold her I won't let you see her."

Lord Delamere smiled.

"I have no such intention. Had we not better introduce ourselves? I am Edwin Delamere, Nell's nearest relation."

"Lord Delamere," said Phyllis, with a little stress on the title; "and I am Miss Ward. The Sisters always forbid me to speak to strangers; but I suppose in this case they will forgive me."

"You don't mean that you live at St. Hilda's?"

"Why not?"

"You don't look like it in the least."

Phyllis looked at him with a glance of mock reproach.

"Don't, please, tell me that; I have heard it so often. I know it by heart; all the Sisters in a body have told me I carry worldliness stamped on every feature. One suggested I should cut off my hair; another that I should wear spectacles; while a third was sure a course of religious teaching would improve me. I honestly mean to take all their pieces of advice some day, but at present I have forgotten to."

"Long may your neglect continue," said Edwin, gallantly. "I can't imagine what took you to such a place as St. Hilda's!"

"The uninteresting fact that I was of the surplus feminine population. There was nothing particular for me to do. My friends knew Sister Ida, and thought it would be the making of me to come here."

"And has it been?"

Phyllis laughed.

"Really, you are too inquisitive. At present the chief effect of which I am conscious is a strong longing for anything in the shape of gaiety. A penny reading last winter seemed a perfect harvest of dissipation."

"And now you have left St. Hilda's?"

"I am taking care of Lady Charteris."

They both grew grave. Acquaintances of a moment as they were, Edwin felt he could trust this merry girl for a truthful answer, so he asked,—

"What do you think of it?"

"Of what?"

"The marriage."

"I am sorry."

"Why? Are you sorry for him or her?"

"For her."

"But Royal Charteris is a husband any woman might be proud of!"

"Only pride is not Nell's strong point. She is so simple and old-fashioned as to believe in love."

"Well, she might learn to love him."

"That's the pity of it."

"Why?"

"She loves him now. You see they had told her romantic stories of him beforehand. I believe, poor child, she made a hero of him before she even set eyes on him!"

"If she loves him, of course she believes him innocent?"

"Of course."

"Then why should she be unhappy?"

"Because, blind as she is in some things, there is one point on which she is clear enough—she knows perfectly well Sir Royal has married her without a spark of affection."

"Well?"

"It isn't well. She is just fretting to death over it. It's in vain I preach to her; my eloquence is entirely thrown away. 'Don't fret, Nell,' I tell her, 'if he doesn't come to his senses it is his loss,' but it's no use, she just looks at me and begins to cry. If I tell her she's Lady Charteris of Marton Hall, which is a great deal better than just being plain Mrs. So-and-So, instead of being grateful for the recollection, she asks me if I am heartless."

"And you tell her?"

"I tell her yes."

"But are you?"

"Certainly."

"Why?"

"I can't afford a heart," said Phyllis, ruefully. "I'm always in hot water with the Sisters now. Oh, dear me! what would they say if I developed such an inconvenient thing as a heart?"

"But you don't mean to stay here always?"

"I don't know. We all tried our fortune on Midsummer's Eve. If mine comes true, I certainly shall not stay at St. Hilda's."

"What was it?"

"I was to receive a certain appendage, which, I may observe, is generally useless except to the owner—not half so good a fortune as Hester Stanhope's. She was to have a red brick house and a brass knocker."

"Happy Hester Stanhope!"

"To be sure. What could be more suggestive of comfort and substantial means than a red brick house, not to mention the brass knocker?"

"What was Nell's?"

"Nell's has come true already. She was to save a life. I suppose she has saved Sir Royal's. I hope he will be properly grateful."

"I hope so too. Miss Ward, as I have not the least desire to scold such an important person as Lady Charteris, won't you let me see her?"

"Remember, if I do, and the murder comes up, you are to profess entire faith in Sir Royal's innocence. A doubt would kill her!"

"As I have the faith, it will not be difficult to profess it. Happily for them both the assizes are next month. A few weeks and Sir Royal must be condemned or acquitted!"

Phyllis came back with Nell. Lord Delamere realized then what he had lost. She was a pretty creature this cousin he had meant to marry as a condescension. Then it came upon him that black eyes were more fascinating than brown ones, and that in all the world through he had never met such a bewitching face as Phyllis Ward's.

"I have seen Sir Royal!" said Lord Delamere, when Phyllis had left him alone with Nell. "Surprised as I was to hear of your wedding, and strangely as it has come about, I must congratulate you. I like him very much."

"And you believe in him?"

"Firmly!"

Nell raised his hand and pressed it to her lips.

"I know the man was like him, but Sir Royal never killed John Dalrymple, Edwin; he could not have done such a thing."

"You have entire faith in him, then? And so, Nell, this is the end of your wish to live in a Sisterhood! Don't you think you imposed on the Sisters dreadfully?"

Nell shook her head. She had no time for words. Giles opened the door, an expression of joyful triumph on his face as he ushered in a small poorly-clad child, who walked up to Nell, holding in her hand a gentleman's gold watch, on the back of which was the Charteris crest.

Lord Delamere glanced at it, and saw the glass was broken, but the hands at stopped at five minutes to eight. He knew then that Royal Charteris was safe.

"Look up, Nell!" he said, kindly; "this watch must convince people Sir Royal's account of himself is true. He is as safe as though he were free now, and in this house."

Nell looked not at the watch, not at the child who brought it, but straight into her cousin's face.

"Do you mean he would have been safe in any case now even if he had not married me?" she asked, feverishly.

"Yes. You see the watch, which was found more than two miles from the scene of the murder, with the hands stopped at five minutes to eight, proves that Sir Royal could not have been by the river at the time the murder was committed."

Nell turned to him with a sob.

"Oh, Edwin, then the marriage was not needed after all? Can't it be undone? Can't I set him free?"



Before he could speak she had read his answer in his eyes. With one bitter sob she fell back senseless; and the child who had been till then a silent spectator of the scene, shook her little fist at Lord Delamere, and said, angrily,—

"You've killed her!"

"My Popsy!" he exclaimed, as he recognized the little wail; "what brings you here?" And then he rang furiously for assistance, little thinking that poor Nell would have welcomed death gladly, since it seemed to her far less pain than knowing herself a helpless burden on a husband who had but married her to secure her silence.

Poor little Nell!

(To be continued.)

## TRUE AS THE STARS.

—30:—

### CHAPTER XX.—(continued.)

"DORMER has fallen; he's down there," and then he pushed his way through them, turning a deaf ear to all further questions, and making his way downstairs, passed out by an open door through which the cool night air was blowing into the fragrance and the silence of the garden.

Not a sound broke the stillness except the distant splash of a fountain, and a terrible fear came over him as he hurried on, counting the windows as he went to find the spot where Dormer must have fallen.

He came upon it soon, and his heart stood still, as in the shadow he saw something lying—oh, so quietly!—on the ground, and a girl's white dress beside it.

"Quick—get some water—brandy—anything!" Rhoda said, hoarsely, her eyes fixed on the white face pillowed on her lap.

Percy went off at once.

An agonising fear froze her heart, and turned the blood to ice in her veins. She could not have felt a more deathly chill if this had been Douglas Yelverton lying there as helpless as a log instead of his friend. Was he dead? Rigid, as if cut in Parian marble: there was no sign of life upon that cold, white face, so stern and awful in its perfect beauty.

She shook from head to foot, and felt deserted by all mankind—only because one minute of suspense seems quite as long as a usual quarter of an hour.

"Speak to me! only one word!" she entreated, and then a great sob rose in her throat and cut short her powers of utterance. But it was as if her soft, sweet voice had power to bring back Frank's spirit from its upward flight. His eyes quivered, his lashes slowly lifted, his dark eyes looked with his unguarded heart looking out of them up into hers.

"My darling!" he said in so soft a whisper that she could scarcely catch the sound.

Her heart gave one wild bound as if it would leap out of her breast, an extraordinary sensation came over her, such as she had never felt before, of delirious joy and acute pain, and she seemed as if she must cry aloud.

Tears rushed to her eyes, and fell like blistering drops upon Frank's face, fevering his blood, and sowing the seed of lasting pain. Words that she would have rather died than utter rose to her lips, and had to be forced back by an effort of will.

Was she going mad from the sudden shock to her nerves? Why was it that every pulse was throbbing, and her poor, foolish young heart beating so fast that it nearly suffocated her?

Percy came back and roused her, and a number of others hurried up after him. They helped her to get up from her cramped position, and Lord Faulkner put his arm round her quietly, because he saw that she could not stand.

"Don't take me away!" she said faintly, clinging to his arm.

"Poor little thing!" he said, compassionately. "You've been hardly punished."

"But he will get better?" shaking from head to head to foot, and scarcely noticing his words.

"Yes, if you don't do your best to kill him!" and then, without explaining, he gave her into the charge of three of the ladies who were standing by in a frightened group, and went forward to offer his services in raising the injured man on an improvised stretcher.

Lady Diana had already despatched a groom in search of a doctor, and sent for the housekeeper, and given her the necessary directions. Now, with a slow step, and an unusually pale face, she followed the melancholy procession into the house.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### THE FEAR OF RETALIATION.

WHAT had become of Lady Diana Stuart during the game of hide-and-seek which had ended so disastrously? Many people asked that question, but only one man could answer it. When the shutters were shut, and the game had just begun, Lord Faulkner, with a resolute expression on his face, which nobody could see, stopped Lady Diana from going where the others had hidden themselves, and suggested that they might as well keep where they were—that is in the furthest room, which they had all to themselves.

"You have only started this ridiculous game for my cousin's sake, and you can't want to join in it yourself," he said in a low voice, standing straight between his companion and the doorway.

"But I want to see that all goes right."

"Or all wrong. Which would suit you better. Be satisfied. What your object is I can't conceive, but you've laid the train, and it is sure to explode."

"I don't know what you mean!" in her haughtiest manner.

My cousin and yours are hiding together behind a curtain, whilst Dormer is only two feet from them. What the consequences will be I leave you to guess."

"They are nothing to me."

"Then I greatly misunderstand you. But let us talk of something more interesting. Do you remember your promise?" his hand upon her arm, so that she should not escape him.

"I remember yours, that you would not interfere," she flashed back at him.

"I am sorely tempted to-night. The child is so young, and I'm all in the dark, in more senses than one. If you don't keep yours I swear that I'll break mine."

If he could have seen it he would have felt his power, for her face grew pale with the conflict of feeling. Should she give everything up and send him away? She thought of Rhoda's beauty—of Douglas's inflammable nature—his return might be a question of months, and he had admired the child before he went away. Oh! if, through fancying herself compromised in some way or other, Rhoda could be brought to imagine herself obliged to marry either Percy or Captain Dormer! It scarcely mattered which, only Frank Dormer was Yelverton's friend, and it might disgust him more to find that his friend had not scrupled to cut him out behind his back. If Lord Faulkner had never come there might have been some chance, but now, if he interfered, all her work would be undone.

"We'll talk of this another time," he said, trying to temporise. "Don't you know that we are playing a game?"

He went a few steps from her, and opened a shutter. A bright beam of light shot at once across the room, and she discovered that he had shut the door.

"You've made a mistake in shutting the door. Mufli will never find us," she said quietly, as she moved to a door.

With a few long strides he placed himself in front of her. "I don't intend him to find us. Is it too much to ask to have you to myself for one quarter of an hour?"

"Yes, when we are only playing at being lovers."

"You think I am in play?" scornfully. "I will show you that I am not."

Before she could become aware of his intention, he threw his arm round her, and, stooping, quick as lightning pressed his lips in one long passionate kiss upon her beautiful mouth.

"I hate you! I will never speak to you again!" she cried, her eyes flashing.

"Yes, you will," very quietly; though his heart was beating loud, and every pulse was leaping. "By the rules of the 'Small Round Tables' one kiss is allowed. You made the rule yourself. You must have meant me to keep it."

"Never, never!"

"Yes, you did," still with that smile upon his face. "You did not know that when you consented to play at this sort of thing for fun during a month, I meant you to play at it in earnest for the rest of your life."

"I will break up this society to-morrow," trembling with rage.

"Do—it will make no difference. As I have begun, I mean to go on—and I generally have my way."

"If you think your will is stronger than mine you are mistaken," drawing up her snow-white throat.

"Your will is often thwarted by your own impulses. Mine is steady as a rock. Sister Di, as you've begun you must go on," looking down into her defiant eyes with a sort of fierce tenderness in his own.

She shook her head vehemently, the star of diamonds hidden in her dusky hair gleaming in the moonlight.

"Do you forget that I'm made of flesh and blood?" standing over her as she leant against the wall. "Can I call you by your Christian name, and even touch your lips to-day and go back to a formal 'Lady Diana' to-morrow? I'm not a statue, but a man—do you understand?"

Against her will she shuddered, and he saw it, and took it as an evidence of his power.

"Do you remember that I am engaged to Captain Yelverton?" she said haughtily.

"I remember that you were last autumn," very slowly.

"It has never been broken off!" with something like a gasp.

"No?" in a voice of calm inquiry. "I thought it possible that it had died out. Has he never heard of the pranks which go on at Castle Stuart?"

Ah! how his words stabbed her, as her hands clenched themselves till the nails dug into the soft pink palms! How they carried her back to that miserable day when Yelverton's wrath was hot against her, and she could scarcely soften him by prayers for pardon and tenderest caresses!

"He will hear of this," he went on remorselessly. "Not from me. I would rather die than tell him; but there are half-a-dozen women in the house, and they all have tongues—they will exaggerate as they always do—and you know best what Yelverton will think of it!"

"Are you a fiend? Do you want to drive me mad?" exasperated almost beyond her powers of control.

"Not mad, dearest," in a tone of unaccounted tenderness; "but I must be cruel, in order to bring you to me. It is often the storm-wind which drives the boat into the harbour!"

"And you think that you would be my harbour of refuge?" she asked in bitterest scorn.

"I am sure of it. Listen, Di! I am not like Yelverton. He has peculiar ideas about women." Again she shivered, and again he smiled. "He would go wild if he saw his wife with a cigarette in her hand—he would like to shut her up in a box, and hide her

from all eyes but his own. Now I am different!"

"Yes, as summer and winter," her eyes flashing with angry contempt.

"And therefore more suited to you. I am a man absolutely without prejudices. I like a girl with plenty of go, and it amuses me when her pursuits run in the same line as my own!"

"Don't talk to me; you sicken me!"

"You can't deny that my standard is a more convenient one than Yelverton's—more suited for a woman who likes to play hide-and-seek in the dark, and pay nocturnal visits to smoking-rooms," dropping out his words one by one, as if counting the number of things they gave.

"And if I do—there is no harm in it," she cried, defiantly, in the midst of her rage and pain; "I've only done it for fun, and to open the eyes of your cousin."

"I see no harm in it. If you stood on your head, I should vow it was the best attitude for a woman, Di! You must belong to me—we suit each other down to the ground."

"I am engaged, and if I weren't—" something seemed to catch her breath, and the sentence was left unfinished.

"Are you sure you are?" very low. "Did he come to say good-bye?"

"There was no time."

"I think there was. A man makes time for what he wants to do. If he had chosen he could have run down here, and pretended that he had missed the Colonel's telegram."

"Impossible. I know it was impossible!" her breast heaving, the tears rushing into her eyes.

"Give him up, Di!"

"Never. Oh! you don't know me if you think I could!" her heart feeling as if it would burst, as the agonising doubt in her mind grew to the certainty against which she felt she must fight or go mad. "I tell you I love him with my whole heart and soul; and I'll cleave to him through everything till death us do part."

Lord Faulkner turned white with suppressed passion, and all the worst instincts of his nature were called into play.

"It is difficult for a woman to cleave to a fellow who throws her over," he said, coarsely.

Her very lips went white, but she had the courage of her race. Holding her head very high, she looked him straight in the face,—

"It seems difficult for you, Lord Faulkner, to talk like a gentleman."

He bit his lips, and frowned.

"Has Lady Diana the right to be very particular?"

What she would have answered is uncertain; but at that moment there was a loud noise in the next room, followed by a girl's cry.

"Good heavens! what is that?"

"Your policy has borne its fruits," he said quietly, as he threw open the door. Lady Diana darted through it, and looked wildly round. She could see Percy standing in the moonlight by the broken window—but where was the other? Only horror-struck faces met her eyes. Amongst which she missed the one she was looking for, "Captain Dormer?" she faltered, afraid of the answer.

"He has gone through the window," said Major Bond, all the colour gone out of his usually ruddy face. And then before she could ask another question, he followed Wyndham out of the room.

"What has happened?—tell me!" she persisted, catching hold of Kitty Patterson's arm. "He is not hurt much. Oh, for heaven's sake, tell me he is not dead!"

"No, no!" recovering from her own fright, to wonder at Lady Diana's agitation; and then she added, conscientiously, "We don't know yet. The others have gone to find out."

"I must send for the doctor," said Lady Diana, turning away, sick at heart. If Frank Dormer died, she felt almost as if she would be his murderer. Lord Faulkner had predicted some catastrophe from the first; but she had so far heeded his fears, in her

ferce anxiety to thrust Rhoda into the arms of one of the two men. So long as she married either she did not care which it might be, nor what means she employed to obtain her object. But now, with the fear of death before her, her heart sank within her, and a fearful foreboding came over her. Could she ever hope for a blessing on her love for Douglas Yelverton, if she tried to secure it by the death of a man who had never done a harm—by the misery of a young innocent girl who had only sinned against her in all ignorance?

"Oh, Heaven, in mercy don't let him die!" she prayed, clasping her hands on her chest, begging for a man's life, not in order that he might be saved to fulfil the nobler purposes of his existence, but for the sake of her own most selfish ends.

"Don't be afraid! he won't die," said Lord Faulkner, as his tall form emerged out of the shadows, close by the open glass door through which Dormer had just been carried. "But oh! for heaven's sake, forgive me. I was mad just now, Lady Diana—I was indeed; but say you will forgive me!"

"If he doesn't recover I shall never forgive you, or myself either. If he does, I'll try and forget this night with all its horrors," she said bravely, and passed into the Castle.

"And I shall remember it to the last day of my life," he answered, though she could not hear; "for you shall be my wife, so sure as there is a heaven above us!"

## CHAPTER XXII.

"DOUGLAS YELVERTON BELONGS TO ME!"

A SOLEMN silence fell on Castle Stuart. In place of peals of happy laughter, and all the merriment which follows the steps of happy youth, there was a cold, dreary time of suspense. Doctor Gillingham came as quickly as the fastest horses could bring him; but after a careful examination of the patient he was obliged to postpone his verdict. The next day he might discover how severe his injuries had been; but at present, during the state of syncope, satisfactory investigations were impossible. Lady Diana could get but little out of the old doctor, who had attended her when she out her small first teeth, vaccinated her beautifully moulded arms, been consulted about her childish bursts of temper, and consequently stood in no more awe of the Earl's daughter than of any of the other girls in the parish whom he had known as babies. Lady Diana went to her room, but she could not sleep. The wildest fancies kept flitting through her brain. Captain Dormer would die, and some kind friend would send the news of how it happened to Egypt. Her own complicity would be exaggerated, and Douglas would shrink from her as the murderer of his friend.

"No, no, no!" she cried aloud to the stars, as she leant out of her window, "the blame shall be hers, not mine. I'll tell her so—now, at once!"

And so she hurried out of her room to find the innocent back to bear the burden of her own guilt. There was no pity in her wild heart, not even for the young officer struck down in the power of his strength, and rendered helpless as a baby—no pity for the girl whom she meant to bend or break to her will.

She started when she found herself face to face with Rhoda, wandering like a homeless ghost about the wide corridors.

"You are just the person I want!" she said abruptly. "Come into my boudoir," pushing open the door of a handsomely furnished room as she spoke.

Rhoda went in obediently, and waited silently whilst Lady Diana struck a match and lighted the candles on the mantelpiece. She was past the stage of wondering what would happen next; and only conscious of a constant fear.

"Sit down," said Lady Diana, pointing to a

sofa, covered with exquisitely embroidered satin. "Now tell me how it happened?"

Rhoda turned away her face, as she described how Percy had insisted on kissing her, and Captain Dormer had interfered.

"I don't know how it was, for I heard the crash, and saw Captain Dormer fall all in a moment, just as Mr. Wyndham swore a dreadful oath!"

"Then it was your fault!" looking at her with cold, resentful eyes.

"Mine? How could it be?" infinitely startled.

"You have led Percy on by an affectation of coyness. You have driven Dormer wild through something quite the reverse. You cut off a lock of hair for the one, and gave it to the other."

"I didn't—indeed, I didn't!" in vehement denial.

"Don't deny it; remember what I saw with my own eyes!"

"You didn't understand."

"Excuse me, but I did," with a cruel smile.

"Percy was not in the room when the curl was cut off, but it was in his pocket the next morning, and not in Captain Dormer's!"

"I know, because he stole it."

"An odd sort of way of stealing, with the owner looking on and approving."

"I did not approve. You don't understand," nearly driven wild.

"Poor child!" in a patronising tone. "I think I understand rather better than you do yourself. Percy, dear old fellow, is a thorough gentleman, and would never have thoughts of being so rude as to kiss you unless you had given him the greatest encouragement."

"It was all that horrid society!"

Lady Diana smiled incredulously, and went on pitilessly, though, with an inward shudder, she recollected her own experiences with Lord Faulkner.

"And as to Captain Dormer, do you think he would have asked for a piece of your hair, unless you drew him on like a practised coquette? I've known him longer than you have, and he never dared to ask for a piece of mine."

"He did not ask for it!"

"Worse still if you gave it him without. He was the only man in the room. No explanation is necessary; but I only wish to tell you that one of those two men you must marry!"

Rhoda sprang to her feet, her face white, her eyes opened wide with dismay.

"Marry!" she repeated, hoarsely, like an echo.

"Yes! To put it in plain English, you must be either Mrs. Wyndham or Mrs. Dormer. Percy began in fun, but I really think he is in love with you now. Captain Dormer, I believe, is half engaged to his cousin; but he would stretch a point if I put it to him that your character was at stake!"

"Lady Diana, you aren't," gasped the poor girl, tortured beyond endurance.

A mocking laugh was the only answer.

There was a long pause, during which the only sound she could hear was the beating of her own heart, throbbing with pain and bitter shame.

"There is nothing I cannot dare," she answered, proudly; and the boast was almost true as she thought of Douglas Yelverton, and looked down on the girl whom she had been taught to consider her rival. Then her manner softened, and her tone became more conciliatory.

"What do you want more? Percy is the second son of an Earl; Captain Dormer's family ranks with the highest, to say nothing of his handsome face, which has won him the love of a duchess. He would make an excellent husband—"

"Oh! don't, don't. I cannot bear it!" writhing, as if in bodily torture.

"Absurd child; you love him already. I see it!"

"Oh, Heaven, have mercy on me!" and, sinking on her knees, utterly overwrought by



the long agitating night, Rhoda buried her face on the capitonné cushion of the sofa.

Lady Diana regarded her victim with a glance of fierce triumph. If this child really loved Frank Dormer all her difficulties would be cleared away. When the marriage took place Douglas would probably be estranged from his friend and angry with his friend's wife. In consequence, they would meet but rarely, and the charm that the girl once possessed for him would disappear.

Could anything fit in more nicely—could any plan have succeeded better? Her heart beat fast with exultation, as she went slowly up to the place where Rhoda was kneeling, and said, softly,—

"If you love Frank Dormer you shall be his wife. I will manage it for you."

"What do you take me for?" cried the poor girl, stung beyond endurance. "Have I no pride—no shame—no sense of honour?" And she wrung her hands as if in silent prayer to Heaven.

"There is no need to talk so tragically," said Lady Diana, much surprised. "Love him with your whole heart and soul, and be the wife of one of the best men in England."

"Oh, you don't know! I can't—I can't. I can't marry anybody in the whole wide world." And again she hid her face.

Lady Diana clutched her by the shoulder.

"Is there a reason?" she said, hoarsely. "Have you ever loved anyone else? Is he in Egypt? Answer me truly, as you value your soul. Is his name Douglas Yelverton?"

"Yes," came indistinctly, as it were from the sofa cushion.

In a paroxysm of rage Lady Diana gave the poor shrinking figure a push, which laid it prostrate on the floor—the soft brown hair tumbling in disorder over the carpet, and half hiding the small white face.

"You dare to tell me this," drawing a deep breath, whilst a wave of indignation swept over her soul. "Listen to me, Miss Macdonald. As sure as I stand here you shall never marry him. Do you know that he is bound to me, by vow after vow, and by every law of love and honour? If you attempt to take him from me, there is no crime which I would not commit in order to defeat you. Take care, for nothing on earth should hold me back—neither pity nor conscience—neither fear of Heaven nor man. Douglas Yelverton belongs to me; and I defy you to deprive me of the only man I ever cared for!"

There was a sob in her throat as she spoke, but she choked it down, and stood over her rival with flashing eyes and flushed cheeks, the incarnation of beauty and defiance—a modern Medusa, with the power to do much evil, and the steadfast will whereby to carry it out.

Whilst Rhoda lay there and shivered, aghast at the misery her own husband's faithlessness had cost—powerless to undo the wrong—bound hand and foot by a half-hour's service in a village church—a great pity rose up in her heart for the woman that Yelverton had fooled—for she saw that her love was no idle fancy, but a wild and boundless passion that was eating up her heart, and she knew that her love was in vain—her threats like the empty wind—because the curse of "too late" was on them all. Oh! if she could only tell her the honest truth, and then turn her back for ever on Castle Stuart!

The door was pushed open, and Percy Wyndham came cautiously in on tip-toe.

"Oh, here you are, Di! I've been looking for you everywhere. Dormer has spoken. I think he is coming round."

Then he started back in horror as he caught sight of Rhoda, struggling to her feet. "Good heavens! what has happened?"

"This," said Lady Diana, in a level voice, "We have all made a great mistake. Miss Macdonald cares neither for you nor for Captain Dormer, but for Douglas Yelverton!"

"Impossible!" looking from one to the other with wondering eyes. "Why, he's your property, Di! You must be joking!"

"Ask her!" with a scornful gesture towards the spot where Rhoda was standing, leaning with one small hand upon the table.

She looked up at him with a touching appeal in her lovely eyes. "Mr. Wyndham, I am the most miserable girl on the earth."

"I'd give my life to make you happy!" he said earnestly.

"You are very good!" and her lips trembled. "I believe you have meant to be kind to me, but no one can help me."

"I'll have a try," his good-looking face brightening. "I've worried and bothered you for three weeks, but I vow I won't do it any more. As a real friend, you shall trust to me for the future."

"Very touching!" said Lady Diana, sarcastically; "but friendship is rather disappointing when a girl expects an offer."

Rhoda started and flashed crimson. Percy frowned angrily. "I don't think Miss Macdonald has ever given me the smallest ground for hope, but if she had I would not take advantage of it except when she and I were alone together."

"Don't, my dear boy! I don't want to hurry you!" And then, putting the strongest control upon herself, she turned to Rhoda with a smile.

"Forgive me, Miss Macdonald. I have spoken harshly to you, but I'm not myself to-night," pressing her hand across the dusky curls on her forehead. "You would like to leave Castle Stuart to-morrow I haven't a doubt; but, remember, it would be an annoyance to your aunt, cruelly to Captain Dormer, and a great satisfaction, as I have heard, to Mr. Staveley."

Then, with a bow, she passed out of the room, leaving Rhoda mute with astonishment.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### DANGER!

ONE morning, when a slight rain was falling enough to stop outdoor games, but not to dishearten the roses, Rhoda Macdonald, dressed in a simple blue cambric, slipped away from the rest, and sat down in a quiet corner of the library to write a letter to her aunt.

In it she explained her wishes very clearly, and gave no room for doubt that she preferred the chance of scarlet fever in Sumner Lodge to staying any longer at Castle Stuart.

Whilst she was writing, two men lounged into the room, and she soon discovered from their voices that they were Lord Faulkner and Major Bond.

She was entirely hidden from their view by a large Japanese screen ornamented with golden storks, thrown out in strong relief by a black background, but she did not think it necessary to make her presence known, as they did not seem likely to stay.

Instead of sitting down they walked about the room, staring at the contents of the bookshelves, as if in search of one particular book.

"A flirt!" said Major Bond, apparently going on with some former conversation, as he inspected a volume with such small print that he had to hold it close to his nose to see it. "I should think he was. Yelverton would beat any other fellow into a cocked hat at that sort of game. You know how he treated somebody who shall be nameless?" (Lord Faulkner nodded.) "Then there was the little girl at Pangbourne, who died, so they say, of a broken heart; but, really, the last was the worst of all."

"I never heard of that," said the Viscount, pricking up his ears, whilst Rhoda sat perfectly spellbound, her pen in her hand, her lips parted.

"I heard it from a fellow down there, but he wouldn't tell me the name. It seems he decoyed the girl over to the Island on some pretext or other. There they were enjoying themselves finely, when somebody comes across them with the news that the Lancers are ordered to Egypt. That brought Yelverton to his senses like a clap of thunder. He scuttled back to

land in the very face of such a storm as we rarely get over here; and, having nearly drowned the girl as a parting kindness, went back to barracks as innocent as a lamb!"

"That accounts for many things," said Lord Faulkner, slowly. "I would give something to know the name of the girl."

"The fellow wouldn't tell me—believe he was sweet on the girl himself. I can't find the second volume anywhere—I've got the first."

"You don't know where they went on the Island?"

"No. Not far from Ryde, I fancy."

"I ought to be able to find out something," muttering to himself. "What time was it—morning or evening?"

"They went off in the morning, because there was something about the Ryde boat passing them, and there was a talk of a champagne luncheon at an inn."

"It ought to be perfectly easy to trace them," thoughtfully.

"Oh, quite, if you care to. You can fix the date by the dance at White Fort."

"Should you know the girl if you saw her?" was the next question, which made Rhoda quiver behind her screen, as she looked round eagerly for a means of escape.

Eavesdropping went against her to the last degree, only how could she face them, and not excite suspicion by her evident agitation?

"N—no," said the Major, unwillingly, for he always liked to know everything, and to be able to answer any question; "but I've heard her described as the innocentest-looking child under the sun, with great brown eyes that you could swear belonged to an angel. A sort of girl like Miss Macdonald, I fancy. Lucky that Yelverton never came across her. By Jove! he must," excitedly. "I never thought of it. She lives close to Portsmouth, don't you see?"

"And so do hundreds of other girls," coldly. "My cousin knows how to take care of herself," said Lord Faulkner, stoutly; though he had considerable doubts on the matter himself.

"Of course, I was only joking. Come and have a game of billiards?" sauntering towards the door.

Lord Faulkner followed him, to Rhoda's intense relief, and she was left to recover herself as well as she could.

If the Viscount chose to exert himself there was nothing easier than to find out the truth. A run over to Sea View could soon be accomplished, and, when there, the register at the little church could easily be examined, and the entry would tell its own tale. Oh! what a storm would break over her head when the story was told, and there would not be one to stand up for her! Not a single friend to fight her battle, or to say one word in her favour.

In her hearts of hearts she could not help wishing that that knot had never been tied in Sea View church.

They might have waited—waited till she could have been given to him honourably in the face of the world—not in secret—stealing out of her only home like a thief; and above all, not when he was pledged to another.

Could it be true that he had broken a girl's heart at Pangbourne? She remembered the conversation *à propos* of the girl's funeral at Sea View; and had not forgotten how he scoffed at the idea of any woman on earth breaking her heart for a man—and yet a girl had done it for him! Oh! why did he act so differently to the ideal she had made of him, and drag her idol in the dust!

"Lady Diana's compliments, and will you be so kind, miss, as to step in the drawing-room?" said a smart footman in grey and crimson, rousing her suddenly from the depths of her reverie.

The whole company, with the exception of the patient upstairs, were assembled in the spacious room where they danced so often in the evening.

They were gathered in a circle round their young hostess, who had a Juno-like expression on her handsome face.

"Ladies and gentlemen," she began, in a clear, bell-like voice, "I have asked you to meet me here, in answer to announce that, after due consideration," with a haughty glance at Lord Faulkner, who stood close beside her, "I have decided to dissolve the 'Society for the Propagation of Amusement,' otherwise called the 'Society of the Small Round Tables.'"

A murmur of disapproval rose from the men, whilst some of the ladies looked relieved, and exchanged smiles with each other.

"I wish I had had it last night," whispered Percy, making Rhoda blush most becomingly.

Lord Faulkner, who understood Lady Diana's glance as a challenge, asked if he might inquire the reason of this sudden change of programme.

"Are we to put it down as a consequence of your own experiences last night?" he asked gravely, with a malicious gleam in his eyes, which sent the blood up into her cheeks in an angry wave.

"Not to mine," looking him straight in the face, "but to your cousin's and Captain Dormer's."

"You needn't have dragged the girl into it," he muttered savagely, whilst Rhoda stood bravely forward, and, drawing up her neck, said quietly,—

"Yes, after poor Captain Dormer's accident we could not have gone on with it."

"I don't see that," said Major Bond aggressively. "Dormer didn't belong to the Society. He was out of it from the first."

"Don't you see?" said Lady Diana suavely, "Miss Macdonald was left with only one string to her bow."

"I am not aware that Miss Macdonald wished for another," put in Percy quickly. "She has done as much damage as she could desire with one."

"Lady Diana," said Lord Faulkner, stooping down and speaking very low, "do you imagine that this will make any difference?"

"It will keep troublesome people at a distance," she said scornfully.

"My arms are long; they will reach you wherever you are."

She turned away from him with an inward shiver which she would not have acknowledged for the world; but he read her feelings and smiled to himself—a smile that boded no good.

Late that afternoon Lady Diana was proceeding along the corridor with a number of lovely hothouse roses in her hands. She stopped to look out of a window, through which the light of the sunset was streaming, and a sad look came into her beautiful eyes, and the corners of her mouth drooped.

This great love which filled her heart like the sunset seemed to spread over the sky. Would it, in the dim, dark future, be her blessing or her curse?

Would Douglas ever come back to her, and love her as he loved her last year, when she seemed to be out of his reach? As she was asking this question of her troubled heart she looked round, and saw Rhoda coming towards her.

"I was waiting for you," she said quietly. "I want you to take these roses to Captain Dormer!"

"But I can't," blushing at the mere idea.

"Oh, yes, you can. Nursing is always a woman's mission, and you are not a true woman if you deny it!"

Without waiting for an answer she knocked at the patient's door. The housekeeper, Mrs. Nicholls, opened it at once, and invited them to come in. The Captain was on the sofa, and would be very glad to see the ladies, she was sure.

"And you will be glad to go down to your

ten," said Lady Diana, quickly, a hint that the worthy woman was very willing to obey. It was a large room, handsomely furnished in an old-fashioned style, and the sofa on which he invalid was lying was placed in the bay of a broad window, draped with tapestry curtains.

Rhoda's eyes grew dim, as she looked across at the sofa, and saw how haggard and wan the handsome face looked—how helpless the long, lank figure, once so full of health and strength and energy.

"Give him these roses," and Lady Diana thrust them into her hands. "Go up to him close, and kneel down, so that he mayn't have to raise his voice."

Rhoda went forward as desired, feeling shy and nervous, but when she met the full glance of his large eyes, a sudden agitation came over her; and dropping on her knees, which seemed unable to sustain her in any other attitude, she put the roses in his hands, shaking from head to foot.

Lady Diana saw that the spell was beginning to work, and the sunset came to her aid, and made it absolutely irresistible. The glorious light streamed over the girl's lovely face, burnishing her hair to a full rich gold, giving new lustre to her tawny eyes, transfiguring her beauty into something too exquisite for earth; and Dormer, as he gazed, with his whole heart in his eyes, felt carried away by a wave that he was too weak to resist. He moved a hand and laid it on hers and clasped it tight; then his broad chest heaved with a sigh of endless longing, and the silence that followed was more eloquent than words. Lady Diana slipped stealthily from the room. They were alone. Dormer raised the little hand to his burning lips, still with his earnest eyes fixed upon her face, and making havoc of her peace.

Suddenly she roused herself, "I must go."

"Not yet! Yelverton will have you all his life. Do you grudge five minutes to me?" How could he tell her that he had hungered for a sight of her face, as the starving for a crust of bread? How could he tell her that he loved her madly, hopelessly, when loyalty to his friend commanded him to be silent?

"Not when you are ill," her breath still fluttering. "But are you really better?" her lashes drooping on the velvet of her cheeks.

"Would you have cared if I had died?" in a low voice.

"Cared!" she repeated, wildly. Oh, Heaven help her! Why did her heart, as it beat almost to suffocation, tell her that life would have been empty and happiness dead? She rose from her knees in a panic, terrified and shame-stricken at the knowledge of her own feelings.

"You will come back?"

"I don't know! I'll see—some day," she answered, incoherently, and hurried towards the door.

"Miss Macdonald!" he said, hoping to call her back, but there was no answer. He raised himself on his elbow, looked round the room eagerly, saw that she was gone, and sank back on his cushions in blank disappointment. As the roseate glory faded from the sky, so the light and the brightness left his face.

"Oh, Yel, Yel!" he cried, from the bottom of his heart; "you've ruined Lady Di's life and mine. Will you ruin my darling's as well?"

That night Mrs. Nicholls was distressed to find her patient in such an excited state that he could not sleep. She was obliged to have recourse to a sleeping-draught, although she had an old-fashioned prejudice against it; and she was still more alarmed when the narcotic failed to have the smallest effect. The doctor looked grave the next morning, and questioned the housekeeper closely, but she strictly denied that anything had happened to excite the invalid.

(To be continued.)

## LORD OF HER LOVE.

—10:—

### CHAPTER XXIX.

For the space of two minutes they stand thus. Sybil can almost feel the girl's spirit creep back into the slender frame again. She still keeps her fingers clenched close on Sadie's arm, and it is the firm grip that awakens the poor girl to the hideousness, the full horror of the blow that has fallen on her.

Sybil's heart is beating like a sledge hammer in her breast. In all her wildest dreams she never pictured so great a triumph as this. It is not the moment to prevaricate, she must strike the final blow at once.

"Yes, Gerald Musgrave is here," and she bends closer to the pale distraught face. "He is asking for his wife, Saditha!"

A quiver passes over Sadie's white lips, she is acutely, agonisingly awake to all Sybil's words; but she cannot utter one to save her life.

"You must let me help you," Sybil goes on quickly, "in this fearful moment. Turn to me as a friend, Sadie, I will not desert you!"

As a drowning wretch clutches at a straw so does poor Sadie grasp the offer of help, though how, or in what way Miss Warner can aid her, her brain at this instant cannot realize.

"What can I do?" she murmurs in low, distraught tones. "What can I do?"

"You must temporize. He cannot do much. Remember, he is a criminal hiding from justice, but he is your husband for all that!"

A pang shoots through Sadie's heart that makes her quiver in every limb, to Sybil's intense satisfaction, "and he has a right to demand an account from you of all your actions!"

Sadie passes one cold hand over her brow, and Sybil goes on hurriedly.

"He has written a message to you through Lottie: will you hear it?" Miss Warner glances round half nervously, as she speaks. Sadie makes no sign, but she does not wait for words. "He must see you to-night. He will not be denied. If you refuse this," Sybil's face is growing pale now, "then he will force himself in here, and before every one, before Lord Ardean, he—"

"Oh! no, no! Oh! Heaven not that!" breaks from Sadie's lips. "Anything but that. You are my friend, you promised to help me! You know all my miserable story, you will not let him do that! You will not—"

Sybil puts her treacherous, traitress arms about the girl's form.

"No, I will not let him do that. You must let me advise you, Sadie!"

"Yes, yes! I will do all you say!"

"Then send a written word to Gerald Musgrave at once, appoint a meeting-place this evening! Your husband—I mean Lord Ardean, will not return till late from Galtown. I am thankful, indeed that I asked him to do those commissions for me!" this comes straight from Sybil's heart, it is rarely she utters so deep a truth. "You have therefore an excellent opportunity for being absent, and keeping any appointment you may make!"

"To steal from the house like a thief!" Sadie murmurs, in tones of indescribable anguish and bitterness, burying her face in her hands. "Oh, Heaven have mercy on me! I have been weak, I have been wrong; but the punishment is greater than I can bear!"

Sybil waits a moment impatiently.

"Well," she breaks in at last. "What will you do? Am I not right? Is it not wiser to satisfy this man and prevent any scene of violence taking place here beneath Niel's roof?"

"Yes, yes, you are right!" the poor girl answers, lifting her ashen face from her hands. "I will see him to-night. It will give me some hours in which to prepare my darling for the awful shame, the horror that



I must bring upon him, I must stop him from coming here, whatever happens—that must never be! It—it is all like some hideous nightmare! I thought my misery was all done—that I was free! Ah! may you never suffer as I have been made to suffer through this man. I will see him to-night for Niel's sake! for my darling's sake—but it will break my heart!"

"Come, that is very wise," Sybil says, briskly, her eyes are shining like luminous stars, her cheeks are burning with a patch of red, awakened by the strong emotion within her, her hands are shaking with agitation.

At this moment, it is she, and not Sadie, who is apparently suffering the most.

"We have not a moment to lose. See, here is pen and paper. Write a few lines. Lottie will convey them to their proper destination. Poor Lottie! she is so overwhelmed with grief for you; she can scarcely do anything now; little she thought when she came here, that it was to meet a sister."

Sadie shivers at the word; but she lets Sybil lead her to the table and put a pen into her weak hand.

"Write as follows," Miss Warner commands, and with quivering fingers, Sadie essays to obey. Twice she tries, twice she fails. While bending above her, Sybil Warner's face grows ghastly in its intensity, and she smothers a curse that will rise.

At last, by an extreme effort, Sadie forces her strength to return.

"Meet me," Sadie writes, at Sybil's dictation, "in the hut outside Knarlsborough grounds on the road to the right. I will be there at eight o'clock. I must see you—Sadie."

Were she less stunned by the magnitude of the horror that was fallen on her, Sadie must notice the extraordinary excitement that seems to pervade Miss Warner's actions. She would, too, have penned different words to the man who has come a second time to ruin her life. But her strength is so feeble; her mental agony so great, she notices nothing, she is capable of feeling nothing; but that a black shadow as of death has come upon her golden happiness, and that she stands on the edge of a chasm that is widening with hideous rapidity between her beloved and herself.

It is Sybil who blots the paper; Sybil who folds it.

"Now," she says, in strangely husky tones, "I will run and give this to Lottie; she must take it at once, and she will give him all instructions. You have done very wisely," she adds, just stopping an instant by Sadie's side. There is almost a smile of triumph on her face. "I do not think we need fear failure for our plan to-night."

And with that, she goes swiftly from the room, leaving Sadie standing with her two hands pressed to her burning brows.

Left alone, the poor child gazes slowly from side to side in a dim, wretched way.

"What has happened?" she murmurs, vaguely. "I feel numb! Cold all over. So—so strange!" She moves a few steps nearer; the fire; the movement seems to awaken her; she utters a low cry. "Ah! I know all now. I remember. It is ended, my bright, beautiful life is done. Oh! Niel, Niel, my love! my dear, dear love! Can you forgive me? I have ruined your happiness. I have brought shame on your proud head. I, whom you have done so much for. Why cannot I die now!" moans the poor girl in her madness.

Then suddenly she hears voices, and she recoils that any one seeing her now will be alarmed and surprised at her appearance.

With all her feeble strength she goes from the room, up the broad staircase just as Philip Brewer and Lord Grafford enter the hall, and with baited breath and wildly-beating heart she gains her own room.

Her trembling hands can just turn the lock and then she falls prostrate face downwards on the ground; not fainting, not mercifully insensible, but overwhelmed with the agony which has seized her heart; an agony which is so great that she prays that Heaven

may have mercy and release her soul in death.

Sybil, when she leaves Sadie, rushes hurriedly upstairs and goes to Miss Musgrave's apartment.

"I have succeeded," she says, in tones of deep triumph.

Lottie is sitting crouched by the fire, and makes no reply to this exultant speech.

"Still weeping over spilt milk," Sybil sneers quietly. "Why, Lottie, you astonish me! What on earth is the matter?"

Lottie shudders.

"Can you ask? It's all very well for you, Sybil. Your path is clear; but think of mine! All my chance is gone. Have you forgotten that this Robert Cuthbert was Grafford's cousin, and that he was murdered by my—"

"Your brother! No, I have not forgotten it, seeing that I have just read a full account of the whole affair in that letter. But what has that got to do with your chances with Lord Grafford? Who is there to tell him that Jack Ronald and Gerald Musgrave were one and the same man? Come, you must not be a fool! It is not the time to waste moaning in this way. Besides, I shall want you to-night. You must help me!"

"What am I to do?" asks Lottie, silently.

"You must act to-night your very best. You shall not complain in the future, I can tell you. All you have to do is to keep Grafford amused and out of the way, while I—"

"While you—?" Lottie finishes in a questioning tone.

"While I go out to meet Lord Ardean, and then lead him to the hut outside Knarlsborough grounds, where he will have the pleasure of seeing his pure wife alone with a man, and that man her lover!"

"Suppose it should fail!" whispers Lottie. Sybil laughs.

"I am not so cowardly. I play for big stakes. I must be bold. Besides, how can it fail?—think of the circumstances—the hut—the time of night, Niel's jealousy, and her agitation—the silly fool will condemn herself."

Lottie looks dubious, and says nothing.

"Do you still doubt?" Sybil cries impatiently. "Well; I don't care! To-night will prove how right I am, and give me the success for which I have planned—for which I have longed. Lottie, they say the devil helps his own; then, indeed, it must be some powerful spirit who has come to my aid to-day. Why should I have suddenly determined it would be wise to have Niel out of the way? Why should this letter have come to put such a new and strong weapon in my hand? Who knows!—the fates have smiled, that is enough for me!"

Lottie shudders once again.

"I wish to-night were over!" she says in a low, nervous way, and Sybil laughs again.

"You poor, puny, trembling creature," she says in tones of deepest disdain, "I pity you! As for me I could shout with the fulness of my joy. I think, Lottie, my revenge is close at hand. He will kneel to me—he will turn to me in this hour of shame and misery. He will be mine again—mine; my own to love and hold for ever!"

And, throwing herself into a chair, Sybil gives herself up to her wild and blissful dreams.

Philip Brewer does not accept Lord Grafford's invitation to go into the smoking room when they enter the castle. He has had a long walk to a farm-house, not very near at hand, and he prefers to run up to his room and refresh himself by changing his clothes for dinner.

His man is busy arranging things when he enters. Philip is about to fling himself down in a chair when he catches sight of a note lying on the table. He opens it hurriedly, and his face grows grave.

"Who brought this, Simmonds?" he asks, turning to the man.

The valet looks surprised.

"I don't know, sir," he answers. "I saw it there when I came in, sir."

Philip stands and scans the few hurried, faintly-inscribed words—

"Meet me in the hut outside Knarlsborough grounds on the road to the right. I will be there at eight o'clock. I must see you."

"SADIE."

"What does it mean; what has happened?" he asks himself anxiously. "Why meet her in the hut; why not in the house? Poor child, poor child! It is to escape from these devils, I expect. They have tormented her passing words while I have been away. She must be in great trouble or she would not have written to me like this. I must meet her, and yet I do not like doing it for fear that still greater and more terrible trouble may follow."

He reads the note again and again.

"How agitated she was when she wrote this," he muses. "I cannot refuse to go; it may be something new, something in which I can help her. I would not hesitate about it but Ardean's strange manner leads me to suppose that that fiend has made him jealous of me. Well, she has called upon me in her misery, and I cannot fail her."

He twists the note, and puts it into his pocket while he thinks over the situation with a cloudy brow. Suddenly the cloud goes; he gives a great start, almost utters a shout of joy, and exclaiming—

"The very thing; why on earth didn't I think of that before."

He kicks off his damp boots, hastily pulls another pair on, and having plunged his face into water, and hurriedly thrust his arms into a warm, heavy overcoat, he takes the opportunity of his valet's absence in the servant's hall to slip out of the room, down the stairs three at a time, and out into the darkness once again.

### CHAPTER XXX.

WHEN Sybil asked Niel to get her a list of things, all of which she would never need, she had been surprised just a little at the readiness with which he declared himself willing to start off at once to Galtown and fulfil her commission.

He had long intended riding there on important business connected with the estate, and he suddenly seemed to feel that a few hours' absence from Knarlsborough might do him more good than all the musing and thinking in the world.

It was a cold, miserable day, but as he rode away towards the town Niel drew a long breath of relief, and resolved that he would hold counsel with himself on the pain and growing disappointment that had lately come upon him.

His business in Galtown delayed him until dusk had set in, and remembering that he had left orders they were not to wait dinner for him, Lord Ardean turned into the one hotel and ordered some food.

All Sybil's commissions had been fulfilled, and just as Philip Brewer is striding hastily out in the country lanes without a thought of fatigue, Niel is sitting alone in a room at the hotel staring into the fire, deep in his troubled reflections.

"How I hate myself for doubting her. My sweet love; my child wife," he thinks over and over again. "She cannot be so false; and yet why not? Have I not been deceived once before, why not again?"

His brow darkens, and he moves uneasily in his chair; then he starts to his feet and strides to and fro agitatedly.

"Bee was right," he breaks forth by-and-by. "I should have closed my doors to Sybil Warner and her friends. My happiness has slowly vanished since that day. I have tried to believe her, to think she is sincere and true, but my heart recoils from her; there is some-

thing venomous about her. She is as far from my darling in sweetness and nobility as gold is from dross. Yet she seems to bewitch me at times." He brushes his hand across his eyes. "Her beauty is so wonderful, so very great."

A vision of two faces rises before him at this moment: a regal seductive countenance with its masses of auburn hair and steely grey eyes; and a pure, pale, sweet face, with lips like an angel's, and eyes like glorious stars, and his heart goes forth with a bound to this one.

"I am wrong—I am cruel! Why should I doubt her. Did she not tell me that summer night at Sidmouth that the man was dead. She does not lie; he must be dead, and I am wronging Philip Brewer with my suspicions. If she only knew how many times during this past week my arms have longed to hold her, my lips to touch hers she would not think me cruel and unforgiving. I will end it all to-night," he cries to himself with a sudden determination. "I will go straight to Sadie and open my heart, show her all my love—my jealousy: tell her why I have grown so full of doubt, and then when she sees me at her feet she will confide in me. I shall learn the story of the past—that past that I feel was full of intense suffering and misery to her. If I had but listened to her that lovely summer night I should have spared myself, perhaps, all I have endured this week. I was to blame. It was my fault. My poor pretty love! Ah! Yes, I have been more than unkind to her. She is so young, so very young; a perfect child in years and mind. What may seem to have been strange about her of late has come perhaps from her innocence and ignorance. Well, I will end it all. Our happiness is too great to risk losing even a shred of it, and with perfect confidence it will return, and be as it has been since our wedding-day."

Dinner is served at this moment, and with a mind refreshed by this resolve, and a heart full of eagerness to meet Sadie, Niel sits down and makes a good meal. His brow is unclouded, save when the thought of Sybil's presence at Knarlsborough flashes across his memory; and he looks a different man as he goes forth again, and mounting his horse, which has been well refreshed, he rides away into the darkness of the night.

Armed with a desire for a reconciliation and a complete return of that sweet confidence and companionship which he has craved for every day during the last week, and full of self-reproach and love, Niel will not let any suspicions arise to unsettle or distress him.

He will speak openly to Sadie, and thence forward doubt shall never come again. She shall tell him the reason of her depression, of her fainting fit, of her extraordinary intimacy with Philip Brewer. No longer will he permit himself to be tormented with vague hints or suggestions. He flings doubt to the winds, and will not be content until he has fathomed the mysterious barrier that has slowly and surely arisen between his darling and himself.

The night is very dark, and a thin small rain is falling; but cheerless as it is, Niel's heart is light within his breast.

He is riding at a good even pace towards the Castle, and is on the road which leads direct to it, when suddenly his horse swerves, rears, and with an exclamation of intense surprise Niel draws rein.

Something or some one is crouching down by side of the hedge that lines the road.

"Who is there?" calls Niel, loudly; then, slipping from his saddle and holding the reins in his hand, he peers forward.

He sees a woman's form and hears deep, hurried breathing, as of some one in the greatest excitement and agitation.

"What is it?" he asks, hurriedly. "Did my horse hurt you? Is anything the matter?"

The woman rises from her crouching position, and half staggers back with a choked sob, and at this moment the heavy clouds break from over the pale, struggling moon, and Niel recognises in the pallid, agitated face

a distorted likeness to the beautiful Sybil Warner.

"Miss Warner! Good Heavens!" he exclaims.

Sybil pretends to shrink back.

"Lord Ardean," she murmurs in faint, low accents.

"You out here alone at this time! Surely"—then Niel stops, the whole proceeding annoys and jars on him. "Pray let me conduct you back to the house as quickly as possible, Miss Warner," he adds, coldly.

"I—you—please do not notice me!" Sybil contrives to utter these words in a disjointed way which seems to arise from the deepest emotion. "I know this is strange; but—but I cannot explain now, someday I—I—"

She seems to be falling, and, hastily losing his hold of the reins, Niel supports her in his arms, she is trembling all over.

"You are ill," Lord Ardean says kindly, yet still coldly; Niel has all an Englishman's horror of a scene, and there is something theatrical and unpleasant in this rencontre. "Rest on me. I must think what is best to be done. Ah!" he starts with pleasure. "I forgot, we are close to the old hut where the timber is lodged. Can you walk so far, it can only be a few yards?"

Sybil gives a great shudder, then draws herself from his hold.

"No! no! not there! Oh, Heaven, not there!" Then, as if she were speaking to herself, she murmurs in a low yet clear voice: "The hut—I must keep him from the hut! He must not go there!—Niel must not go and see her there, it will break his heart!"

A cold perspiration breaks out on Niel's brow. These hurriedly-murmured words, uttered in this choked, wild way, have struck straight home.

"What is it you are saying?" he asks, deliberately, and in a concentrated voice. "What—what do you mean? Speak! Tell me all, I demand to know. I will go and see for myself." He takes a step forward; with a muffled cry Sybil flings herself before him.

"No! no! You must not—you shall not!" she is growing almost incoherent, "it will kill you! I—I—came to warn you, to prevent you! Alas! alas! I have failed! But you will not go, you must promise me. She is so young—she does not know—"

Niel clutches both her hands in a cold, iron grip.

"Tell me all," he says, in quiet, even tones. "Who is in that hut?"

Sybil waits, she can feel the strong, the awful agony he is enduring; then, in faint, low tones, she pants, rather than speaks,—

"Your—wife—and Philip Brewer!"

A shock, like an electric current, runs through every nerve in Niel's body; he does not loosen his hold.

"They are there alone! You have seen them yourself?"

"Yes," Sybil is fast losing her boldness, there is something awful, horrible in his quietness.

"Yes, I noticed something strange about dinner time, she did not eat. He was not there. I got nervous, I feared the worst. Afterwards I saw Sadie creep away, disguise herself in a cloak and steal out, then the thought came that she was going to meet him, and—perhaps I might yet save her, I—I followed, weak as I am; no one saw me leave the house! I traced her to this hut. Philip Brewer was waiting outside, he took her hand, flung his arm around her, and led her in!" Sybil takes breath. "Then I thought of you! I remembered you must come home this way! I—I was nearly mad; I suppose all I wanted was to stop you, to warn you, to prevent you from learning this shame and sorrow, and now I have failed I could kill myself when I remember it—I who would give my life for you, Neil!"

Lord Ardean makes no sign as her voice dies away in a wail; but after a moment's silence he speaks.

"Come!" he says, and there is a tone in his voice Sybil cannot refuse to obey. He takes her hand and leads her down the road. His horse is still standing as he was left. In utter silence Niel passes the hut, he does not even quiver or make any sign of the agony he is enduring. About a hundred yards beyond he stops. "Now you can reach the house comfortably. I regret I cannot accompany you all the way. Please go at once, and allow me to suggest that you should remove those damp clothes, or you may suffer in consequence."

Sybil bites her lip, she had hoped to have seen the meeting between Sadie and her husband, but there is no gainsaying Niel in this mood.

With lingering languid steps she moves away, and looks back now and then, only to see Niel standing gazing after her. When she comes to a dark corner all her languor vanishes, and drawing her cloak well about her, Sybil runs fleetly through the grounds to the house.

Niel stands perfectly still for one moment as she vanishes, then he puts up his hand to his brow, and pushes off his hat, and then with set demourner he turns and strides, not hurriedly or hastily, but evenly and deliberately, to the hut.

A faint light issues from between the chinks of wood, and with one bitter cry of despair and misery Niel pushes open the door and strides in.

Just before him is Philip Brewer, holding a large ungainly lantern. He turns with a startled exclamation as Niel enters.

"Ardean!" he exclaims in amazement and some dismay.

Nail's face gleams ghastly pale in the dim light. He moves forward.

"Ay, Ardean, himself, you villain! You infernal villain!"

His hand that still grasps his riding whip is lifted in the air, when a cry rings out from the gloom of the background.

"Niel! Niel, are you mad?"

With a hoarse cry that comes from his over-charged heart, Niel drops the whip and half staggers back.

"Bee!" he gasps. "Bee! you here?"

"Yes, I am here!" returns Mrs. Dalrymple quietly. "And so is your wife; and we demand to know the meaning of your insult to Mr. Brewer, and your presence here!"

## CHAPTER XXXI, AND LAST.

SYBIL WARNER scarcely knows how she reaches the Castle after that meeting with Niel.

Her heart is so full of satisfaction and glad revenge she can hardly contain herself; but she does not intend to permit herself to give way to her triumph just yet. All is not over, although the game is so much in her hand.

She goes into the drawing-room where Lottie, following her instructions, is entertaining Lord Grafford with some difficulty.

The fact that his mother is to arrive at Knarlsborough in a day or two comes as a reminder to the young man that he must be careful. And Lottie's heart is sick and weary when Sybil sweeps into the room.

She has made literally no progress; and, cold, worldly as she is, the memory of her brother's shame, of the heartbroken despair that came in her mother's letter, when she told with what result her search had ended, comes upon Lottie like a dark cloud, from which she sees no escape.

"It is all very well for Sybil," she thinks bitterly to herself; "things progress splendidly for her, but what for me? She does not think of me, and I can do nothing but remember Gerald—his hideous crime, his awful death. I wish, yes, I wish, I were far enough from here. I am sick and weary!"

This expression is imprinted on her face



when Sybil enters, but Miss Warner does not notice it; she is too full of her great success.

She sweeps up to the fire, looking wonderfully handsome; there is an eager thrill in her heart. What will Niel do? Will he kill them both? Her cheeks grow crimson at the thought. She is mad at this moment—mad with revenge and jealous love. The memory of Niel's white, set face fills her with no fear. She only laughs softly and cruelly to herself as she pictures poor Sadie's fear—her despair and helplessness.

"She is caught in a net and by her own doing. Fool!" she thinks, contemptuously.

She has not forgotten her rôle. Immediately on her return to the Castle, she went to her room, destroyed all trace of mud and wet, put some white powder on her face, and hid her strong right hand in the silken sling. She hardly knows what to expect. Will Niel come home alone? Will he bring his guilty wife back for one night? Or will he be fool enough to be won over by her fragile prettiness?—At this Sybil's brow clouds.

"Bah! no. He will never forgive her," she says, after a moment. "It was a clever move—a very clever move; and I have to thank Lottie's mother for it all. Who would have thought that the old woman's journey to Paris would be productive of so much. I have always imagined Gerald Musgrave to be alive; but he is better dead. Such knaves as he are not worth their salt. And what a chance it was that she discovered about this marriage. A few scrawled words on a scrap of paper found in the dead man's hand, that was all! But enough, oh! yes, enough, for a smart detective, who goes down into the country and there discovers that our pure, lovely, angelic hostess is deep enough to conceal her former marriage and pose as a young innocent thing!"

Sybil is sitting gazing into the fire with a contemptuous smile on her lips as she thinks this,—

"No wonder she looks pale and sad. She is too poor a creature to carry a secret with her every day; and it is a secret, I am confident, or she would not have proved herself such a willing tool. Therein lies my strength, for even if Philip Brewer begins to explain the position, he must do so by betraying her. It is very evident he has known all about it, and that explains their intimacy."

Sybil's brow clouds at this. She is vile enough to wish that Sadie were, indeed, the dishonoured woman she has tried to make her. The girl's purity is a continual reproach to her.

"Lottie looks quite wretched," she muses on.

"The mention of the word murderer has scared her. Well, she must plan her own campaigns for the future. I shall have my hands full with my own." Then she grows restless. "What is happening?" she asks herself again and again as the clock slowly ticks the moments away.

"I cannot bear suspense—it always kills me. Surely something must happen directly!"

Even while she is thinking this she hears sounds of hasty footsteps, and voices outside in the hall.

She turns ghastly white and for one moment she feels sick and weak. Then, with a laugh at her folly, and a triumphant glance at Lottie, who is pale and nervous, she composes herself in her chair once more and waits.

Lord Grafford rises with a sigh of relief as he hears voices.

"I expect this is Ardean come home," he says, and he is going towards the door when it is suddenly opened, and Niel enters, leading, or rather supporting, Sadie with his arm.

Sybil's teeth meet in her firm lips, and she becomes ashen white as her eyes meet Niel's, and then go beyond him, and rest on Bee's small figure.

There is a moment's silence—a silence pregnant with meaning to all but Lord Grafford, who unconsciously comes to the rescue.

"Mrs. Dalrymple! Why, I am surprised. I—mean I—didn't know. I—"

"Yes, I thought my presence here would be surprise, but I felt Sadie needed me, and so I have come back," Bee says very distinctly. Then turning to Niel, who has put Sadie into a chair, and is tending her most carefully.

"Niel, I think you wish to speak to Miss Warner, shall we not leave you together?"

"No, stay!" Niel commands rather than speaks. "What I have to say to Miss Warner can be said openly and before you all."

Sybil has risen, and is standing drawn to her full height.

In one instant her triumph has been turned to disaster, and the castle she has reared so revengefully lies in crumbled ashes at her feet. She looks ghastly with the green pallor that has come upon her, and in her eyes a livid light is burning.

Lottie has shrunk into the background, and is cowering out of sight.

Niel moves a few steps nearer Sybil, but he still keeps hold of Sadie's hand.

"Sybil Warner, you should go down on your knees," he says slowly and sternly, "down on your knees, and thank God that you have been spared the guilt of shed blood on your head this night. Woman! do you think of what you have tried to do? What has this child ever done to you? How wronged you that you should plot against her so horribly? I see now how blind I have been. I should have listened to the voice of wisdom, and against all feelings of hospitality and mistaken gratitude should have shut my doors to one who is nothing but a viper, a fiend in woman form. When I think that I have permitted you to be near my pure wife?"

"Pure wife! The widow of a convicted murderer, a treacherous deceitful girl who has—" Sybil hisses between her pale lips.

"Silence," thunders Niel. "You do not know her. You cannot judge her. God grant you may never have the suffering she has endured. My wife is as pure as Heaven's angels, and it is when I remember that I have allowed you to live in the same house with her that I could overwhelm myself with sorrow and disgust." He brushes his hot eyes with his free hand. Lord Grafford looks bewildered, Lottie still cowers behind; but Philip and Bee stand upright, and their faces are eloquent with their emotion.

Sybil breaks in on the pause that follows.

"So much for human gratitude," she sneers. "I save that creature's life and risk my own, and yet—"

"It is false," breaks in Bee quickly. "I have a witness who can prove he saw you lurking behind the hedge, and purposely cause Sadie's horse to swerve to suit your own wicked machinations."

Sybil laughs shortly.

"Fools!" she says curtly, "to have been blinded so long!"

"I was never blinded," Bee replies. "I knew you at your true worth from the first!"

"If we have been blind and have deemed you worthy of our esteem, even our affection, we are so no longer."

Niel is speaking very quietly. "Miss Warner, the farce is ended; a carriage waits at the door to convey you to the inn at Galtown, where you will be accommodated with apartments at my expense until to-morrow. Your belongings shall be forwarded early in the morning. Will you be so good as to attire yourself without delay, both yourself and your friend, Miss Musgrave!"

"So," Sybil pants, staggering back at his manner, "you actually turn me out of doors! Take care, Lord Ardean, take care. Best make a friend of me. I can be a nasty foe!"

"What can you do?" Niel asks contemptuously. "Go, I am not afraid of you."

"I can blazon to the world the story of her shame. I can point the finger of scorn at your wife, who—"

Sybil has drawn near to him, and loosing his hold of Sadie, who is sitting pale and weak,

almost unconscious of all that is passing round her, Niel advance and grips Sybil's arm.

"Silence!" he says, in stern deep tones. "Dare to utter such words, and I will have you flung out, woman as you are. Go! Do your worst, it cannot harm my darling, for by to-morrow the story of her wrong shall be published to the world; all shall know how she has been tried and how she has conquered. Go then and do your worst, I do not fear you, I despise you!"

The love that is burning in Sybil's breast falters at his contempt, and a low cry escapes her lips.

"Oh, Heaven!" she moans, "and I love you! I love you!"

Niel shrunk back.

"Let us end this," he says, trying to hide his disgust. "Your mission is finished here, Miss Warner. It is time you went!"

Sybil gives him one long, eager look, and at the undisguised contempt in his eyes her craven courage revives.

"So be it," she laughs. "I go; but look to yourself, my Lady Ardean; it is to you I owe this, and on you I will be revenged!"

She stands upright, gives one look round, and then goes fleetly from the room and from Sadie's life.

Niel goes to Lottie, who is bending forward, her face in her hands, and touches her gently on the shoulder.

"I am going," she mutters faintly, "and—and I am sorry. I have had so much horror to-day, I think my heart is broken."

She moves forward with faltering steps, and when she reaches Sadie she suddenly kneels on the ground.

"Forgive me," she pleads, in low accents. "Forgive me."

And Sadie, with tears in her eyes, bends forward and kisses her on the brow. The agitation, the excitement, is too much for her. She has grown so weak in her mental agony of to-day that she can bear no more, and as Philip courteously lifts Lottie from her knees and leads her to the door, Sadie falls back, white and unconscious, in her chair.

When she comes to herself, she is lying in her bedroom with Niel bending over her.

"My darling!" he murmurs. "Oh! thank Heaven! Thank Heaven!"

Sadie smiles faintly, then gradually all the horror returns to her, and she gives a low cry.

Niel grasps her two hands and kisses them, and at the touch she looks up.

"You—you have forgiven me?" she asks.

"My darling," he answers tenderly, "it is I who should ask that. I who have wronged you, my own pure love. If I had listened to you that bygone night at Tidemouth this would never have happened!"

"But I should have been braver, Niel," Sadie murmurs.

"And I more just," he returns, with a smile.

Then he bends his head and kisses her, not once but many times, holding her in his arms as he would a baby.

"It has been a cruel, an awful time; but it is over now, thank Heaven!" he says. "Oh! Sadie, you can never know what joy it was to me to see Bee with you to-night."

"I can never hope to repay her for all she has done. How, sweet, she was, Niel, when she told you all about the past, and I know it was painful to her, for she had only just learnt it from Mr. Brewer."

Sadie rests content in his arms for a moment, then says, with a fading colour—

"And—and they are gone!"

"Yes, gone for ever. By Heaven's will you shall never see them again, my darling."

"I was sorry for Miss Musgrave, for she seemed truly wretched," Sadie says, slowly.

Niel is silent for an instant.

"It is meet that she should kneel to you, Sadie, my darling. I will tell you why. Her father was the murderer of your parents' lives. No, he did not shed their blood; he did as



["SILENCE!" NIEL SAYS, IN STERN, DEEP TONES. "DARE TO UTTER SUCH WORDS, AND I WILL HAVE YOU FLUNG OUT!"]

that fiend tried to do to us to-day. Think, my dearest heart—of a girl so lovely as you are; of a man, as noble, as proud, as handsome as your father must have been. You see I know the story. I exercised my rights as your husband and guardian to master it only a day ago. It is a short one; but, oh, so sad, Sadie! Your father was some years older than your mother; but they loved with no common love, and when you were born their happiness seemed complete.

"But a shadow was to fall upon their lives. Your father had a great friend, a Richard Musgrave, to whom he was ever kind and generous. It was from the hand of this man the blow came. He loved your mother, Sadie, and when he pressed his dishonourable suit, and found that she held nothing but contempt and disgust for him, he played the part of Iago. Fearful lest Lady Derwent should betray him to her husband, he concocted a vile plot by which your poor father was, alas! made to believe his wife unfaithful to him and to the honour of his name.

"Let me hold you tight, Sadie! I grow cold when I think of the danger we have just escaped. It was in going after your mother in her supposed flight, which was only a visit to a Convent in Italy, where she had been educated, that Sir Reginald met with the awful accident that made him the cripple you saw him. Sadie, he never saw his wife again.

"Maddened with jealousy and shame, he wrote her a letter, overwhelming her with reproaches, stating he would never willingly meet her; and taking you from her charge, he developed into a profound misanthrope, without a wish or hope in life until a few years later, when your mother's last dying words were conveyed to him, and Richard Musgrave's treachery was discovered.

"Sadie, I will not dwell on the condition of your poor father at this time. You can guess how fearful his mental agony must have been! From then, he had only one motive—*revenge!*

He hunted down Richard Musgrave and his family, and there is no question of doubt in my mind that he sent for you with his failing strength to imprint the seeds of his hatred in your young breast!"

"And yet fate was too strong, and I married the very man in all the world he held in such abhorrence!" Sadie whispers, mournfully, the tears are rolling down her cheeks, brought by the recital of her parents' wrongs.

Niel kisses her softly.

"Darling," he says, "I have told you this story to night, because, from henceforth, I shall bar all mention of the past. It is done. It is buried. We will never recall it. Let it be a compact, Sadie, between you and me, that after this week, we will never even think of the past and all its sorrows. There is only one more trouble for you to meet, my darling!"

Sadie looks at him eagerly, fearfully.

"You must marry me again, my sweet!" he says, gently kissing her lips. "Our marriage is not legal as it stands, for your name must be inscribed as Gerald Musgrave's widow, not simple Sadie Derwent, as it was."

Sadie hides her face on his breast.

"Oh! my darling!" she whispers, "how good, how noble you are. You do not reproach me. You give me nothing but tenderness in all this trouble and disaster.

"Because," Niel answers lightly, drawing her to his arms very close, "because, strange as it may seem to you, my lady, I love you—and shall love you till I die!"

The years roll away. Four winters have come and gone since that memorable night at Knarborough Castle, and two small forms, with phenomenally large lungs inhabit a suite of rooms in the majestic old building. They are bright, handsome children, and their greatest happiness is a romp with mother in the large hall.

"You spoil those brats, Sadie," Bee Brewer

declares as she comes upon them deep in hunt-the-slipper, one lovely spring day. She carries a tiny golden-haired mite on her shoulders as she speaks, and Sadie—grown into a lovely woman—all the more beautiful for the touch time has given to her face and form, laughs heartily.

"And you never spoil yours, I suppose, Miss Bee. Ah! here comes Niel. Run babies, and meet papa!"

The children are kissed and played with, and Niel has a free moment for his wife.

"You look thoughtful, Niel. Has anything happened?" Sadie asks.

"I heard to-day of that wretched woman, Sybil Douglas' death. She has finished her life most miserably. Her marriage with that man dragged her down even lower than she was. It was Lottie Musgrave who was with her at the last, and who nursed her with all the tenderness of a sister. She, at all events, has done well in the past; it is pleasant to remember that."

"We must be kind to her, Niel!" Sadie says gently. She has grown pale as she hears of Sybil Warner's death.

"You shall do just as you like, my darling, in the matter!"

Bee has raced down the passage with her baby on her back to meet her husband, who is emerging from the library where he has been busy correcting proofs of a novel that is being eagerly anticipated by all the literary world. For Philip has now fame and fortune, and he calls himself the luckiest man in the world.

"Sadie," Niel murmurs, as they are alone together, "why is it that you do not get tired of me, a stupid old fogey like me, and a lovely——"

"Hush!" she says, putting her hand on his lips. "My darling, you are my king—my hero. There is no one so good as you are—no one so true and tender. You are more than my husband—you are lord of my life!"

[THE END.]





[THE IMPOSTOR FOILED AT THE ELEVENTH HOUR.]

## NOVELLETTE.]

## BRANDON BEECHES.

—O—

## CHAPTER V.—(continued.)

BRANDON BEECHES was thrown open for a succession of visitors when the London part of the season was over, and Mildred found herself the centre of a little coterie, with admirers by the score and lovers not a few; that is, men who would have been lovers if she had given them the slightest encouragement. Somehow she did not care to be made love to. There was always with her a sort of shadow of the past—a remembrance of the time when that dead Paul Clintock had professed to love her, and all that had come of it.

A curious discovery had been made soon after they left Australia. The old bank-note and the curious ring had been found buried not very far from the Beeches, together with some other articles, that pointed unmistakably to the fact of Paul Clintock being the perpetrator of that and other robberies which had mystified the police. He was dead, and nothing could be done; but Mr. Waite had written a very full account of it all to the Earl, and Mildred had read it. She hated to think even of the dead man. Even now his name gave her a cold shiver whenever it crossed her thoughts, and she tried with all her might to forget him.

By the time she had been in England a year, he had come to be little more than a remembrance. Other thoughts and other images were filling her mind; and rumour was beginning to whisper that the Earl of Clever's lovely daughter would be a duchess before long. The acquaintance had originated in rather a whimsical manner. The duke in question had been travelling in South America, and had heard nothing of the new owners of Brandon Beeches. His knowledge of the late Earl had been slight, his father

having been at feud with that nobleman, and he lived in quite another part of the country. Chance brought him to Surrey, where the Beeches was situated. A pretty place he had heard of was situated in that county, and he thought he should like to buy it. He did buy it, and while he was superintending some alterations, and suggesting more to his architect, the prettiest girl he had ever seen walked into the room where they were standing, with a great dog at her heels.

She apologised hastily and retired, after giving him to understand that she had no idea the place was tenanted; and that she had been in the habit of walking in the grounds, and sketching there without imagining she was intruding.

"Our own house is next door," she said, in the most unaffected fashion, and the Duke had no idea who she was, or that "next door" was the stately home of the Clevers, a good mile and a half away across the park.

His description of her to one or two persons with whom he conversed failed to get him any information as to who she could be. "A beautiful girl in a muslin dress with a dog!" might have applied to almost any young lady in the vicinity of Elmhurst, as his new place was called. Only strangers had been with him at the time of the meeting; and though he roamed about listlessly for some time, asking here and there about the mysterious young lady, he could gather no intelligence about her. Most people imagined she must be one of the many farmers' daughters in the neighbourhood. The place had been empty for a long time, and many girls, doubtless, had been in the habit of going there when they liked.

Mildred's second season in London was at its height, when the Duke of Thirkford made his appearance in society once more. He was very rich, and unmarried, consequently a most desirable party; and husband-hunting maidens and manoeuvring mammae pricked

up their ears at the sound of his name, and saw chances of landing a big fish.

He was a young man of sense and humour, and he laughed in his sleeve at all the adulation that was lavished on him, and all the pretty artifices used by the damsels of high degree to win him. He was polite to everyone, but went in and out amongst them with not one single heart-flutter, till one day he found on his table an invitation to "the Countess of Clever's ball."

"Oh, the Australian folks!" he said to a friend who was with him; "I have not come across them yet. What are they like?"

"Savages of the first water," the gentleman replied. "What did you expect?"

"I hardly know; not much, I think. I suppose I must go for an hour!"

"All the best people go. I think you had better. You will be astonished."

"I expect I shall," the Duke replied. "I have seen something of the manners and customs of Australia, and I was not impressed."

He remembered his words when he was ushered into the presence of the "Australian people." He had been at Clever House—a grim-looking huge mansion many years before, when quite a lad—and had seen the present Earl's father, a stern man, as grim as his house; and he had been glad to get out into the sun and air after the interview—everything looked so heavy and dull. Now the mansion, renovated and brightened up, was a blaze of light, and the grand old hall was one fairyland of flowers.

Footmen in new liveries, tasteful and not gaudy, attended on the guests, and all the beauty and fashion of London seemed to be congregated there.

The grand staircase seemed like another bit of fairyland, with its hidden lights and its banks of blossoms, and the host and hostess looked like an emperor and empress receiving their guests.

The Malcolm Thurston of the farm had

always been reckoned a handsome man; he looked doubly so now in his evening attire, and his wife made all the matrons of her set look common and over-dressed by the quiet elegance of her attire and manners.

"Mildred, my love. His Grace the Duke of Thirford!"

Lady Clever turned to a young girl beside her with the words, after the Duke had been presented to her. The young lady was speaking to another arrival, and had not noticed the Duke. At the sound of her mother's voice she turned and looked at him with the eyes of the young lady in muslin, whom he had sought so unsuccessfully and so long. For a moment she gazed at him in bewilderment, and then she laughed—not a confused boarding-school girl sort of laugh, but as if she were genuinely amused.

"I have met his Grace before, mamma!" she said, holding out her hand, as her mother formally introduced her.

"I did not know, my dear. Where?" Lady Clever said, wondering.

"Oh, in his own house; and I was very rude to him."

"I hope not. If you were, the Duke must lay it to *gusherie* from the Antipodes. We are hardly English people yet, your Grace."

"It was I who was rude in not begging this young lady to use my house as she liked," the Duke said, smiling at Lady Clever's mystification. "Lady Mildred and her dog came into a house of mine close to your place in Surrey. I daresay she has told you."

"Yes; but we had no idea who the gentlemen were that she disturbed. She will beg your pardon for her trespass now."

"Yes, indeed, I will," Mildred said, warmly. "I am so glad we have met again, so that I can explain."

Her delightful freshness was a new experience to the Duke, and he thought he had never seen such a lovely girl.

Before the evening was over they had danced together several times, and he had quite forgotten that he had promised to go to two other places at least, and had declared that he should not stay at Clever House more than an hour.

The chaperons and their charges set down Mildred as a manoeuvring young person, and vowed that she had been trying to catch the Duke. Nothing of the sort had entered her head.

She liked him, and thought him less artificial than any of the men to whom she had been introduced. He could talk of things in which she was interested, and she was not ashamed to show her interest in any subject she liked, and did not answer just "Yes" and "No" to his remarks.

Her beauty was a revelation, too. It was so fresh and untouched by the wear and tear of London life; it was like a breath of the woods, he told his friends, and it soon became evident that if she chose to say "Yes" when he asked her that the Australian farmer's daughter might be Duchess of Thirford.

All through the whirl of the season he was her shadow. Life seemed to have no charm for him unless she shared it with him; and at the close of the gay time in the capital his yacht, newly-decorated and equipped, was placed at the service of the family, and Mildred was begged to enjoy a cruise after the fatigues of fashionable life.

It was evident what the end of it all would be; and one evening, on board the *Foamflake*, as the setting sun was making a pathway of fire across the still water, the Duke asked Mildred to be his wife.

"You must have seen that I love you beyond all earthly things," he said. "Mildred, darling, say yes?"

Her colour came and went strangely, and she did not answer for a moment—only plucked a flower she held in her hand to pieces, and let the petals fall into the dark water below her.

She was not asking herself whether she loved the handsome man at her side. The

love had come into her heart unasked. She was thinking of that long past time when she and Paul Clintock—bah! there was no need to think of it now. He was dead, and would never trouble her or anyone else any more. Why should she think of him?

"You do me too much honour, your Grace," she faltered presently.

"Honour! Ah, Mildred—forgive me that I use your name so freely; it is always in my ears. I fall asleep with it on my lips, and wake speaking it. Dear, if you say me nay—"

"If I do, what then?"

"Not much"—and his tone was hard and dry now. "I should only go straight back to the South American forests, and try to lose myself there. It would not signify to any creature on earth that I know of."

"It would signify to a great many. You have your duties to your tenantry, and to yourself. No man should throw away his life for a woman. Some people say we are not worth it."

"Would it signify to you, Mildred, if I were to go away to-morrow, as I shall if you speak the little word I dread? Would there be one regret in your heart? Would you dance one dance the less at your next ball? Say, darling, shall I go or stay? The decision rests with you."

What Mildred said is not chronicled, but the Earl, emerging from the cabin unexpectedly, and invading the nook where the pair had thought themselves out of sight, beheld his daughter in the Duke's arms—her slight form almost lost in the huge hug he was bestowing on her.

"Mildred! Your Grace!" he exclaimed, and the pair sprang asunder, recalled to the things of this world by his voice, and looked at him in curious confusion.

"I beg pardon, my lord," the Duke said presently, recovering his wits, while Mildred blushed furiously, and hid her face on her father's arm. "Allow me to introduce this lady to you, Her Grace the Duchess of Thirford. Look up, my darling, and tell your father what we have settled."

Lord Clever could not find words to say then. He had foreseen what must happen as far as the Duke was concerned, but he had not been sure of Mildred. He held out his hand silently, and led his daughter away.

"I will come back to you presently," he said. "I will take her to her mother now."

"It is settled then?" he said to his daughter, when they reached their own cabin.

"Yes, papa."

"And you are crying over it as if you were sorry. Are you sure you love him, child?"

"Quite sure, papa, with all my heart. I have been so afraid he would find it out."

"Most girls would have been anything but afraid!" Lord Clever said. "I must have a talk with him before the thing is finally settled; he has everyone's good word, but we do not know much of him, and I cannot give my little girl to a man who is not worthy of her."

"He is worthy, papa, I know."

"He is all the moral and Christian virtues handsomely bound I have no doubt, dear," the Earl said, lifting up her face and kissing it. "But I must be sure I shall have something to tell him too. Will it make any difference to him, I wonder, when he knows that his desired Duchess has fed the pigs on occasions before now, and driven the calves in the fold and—?"

"You know it won't, papa. He knows all about that already, and he would have liked to help me do it, he says; but, papa—"

"Well, dear!"

"You won't tell him the other thing, will you, about—about Paul Clintock?"

"The whole story of the note and the ring? I don't know, child; I must think. Your husband ought to know."

"I don't see why, papa. He is dead."

"Yes; but the subject might arise some day. I hope it never will, but it may, and it would seem as if we had not been open with him."

"It can't arise, papa; no one knows a word about it, not a creature. Ah, do not tell him! Promise me, papa. I cannot bear to think of it. Leave it for me to tell him in my own time; promise me, papa, dear. Give me your word that you will not say anything about it. It is all over, and cannot be brought up again. Say you will not, there's a darling papa; you may wreck the happiness of my life if you speak now."

And against his judgment Lord Clever promised his daughter that no word about bygone trouble should pass his lips to the Duke.

## CHAPTER VI.

### A CLAIMANT FROM OVER THE SEA.

THERE was no happier man in all England than Edgar Armdale, Duke of Thirford—at least he told himself so with every fresh day; and if wealth and love and the possession of all that goes to make perfect felicity in this world could bring him happiness, he certainly was.

The wedding had been "the prettiest thing of the season," everyone declared who had assisted at it; and the fact of its exquisite simplicity had helped to make it so. The bride and her attendant bevy of fair girls looked like a troupe out of fairy land, in their white dresses and asperb flowers.

Mildred pronounced one or two weddings that she had seen "barbarous in the amount of decoration bestowed upon the dresses," and said she would strike out a new line for herself, and have nothing but the freshest and purest white, and no jewellery.

Her fashionable friends cried out and declared that the thing would be "dowdy," and out of all precedent—that bridesmaids wore colours, and that her idea of simplicity would look mean.

She was firm, and called to her aid the dressmaker who had undertaken her toilettes since her appearance in the fashionable world. The modiste was an artist as well as a dress-maker, and understood what was wanted.

She told Lady Clever and her daughter that she believed Mildred's wedding would bring about a new fashion altogether, and that her soft muslin and lustrous silk would be the coming attire for the rest of the season for bridesmaids.

She took the little sketch that the bride-elect made and followed it closely, and the result of her labours was, that the group that stood at the altar looked as if they had walked out of an old picture.

Mildred's own dress was of the softest and richest satin, and fell about her in glistening folds. She wore also the Clever lace, an heirloom as costly almost as the diamonds, and the veil that fell almost to her feet had covered the head of many a bride of the old race. It was a priceless fabric, and had its history like all the family possessions.

Only one jewel shone amongst its folds—"the bride's star" as it was called—which Clever brides had always worn from time immemorial. It was supposed to betoken good or ill-luck to the wearer, according as it sparkled or looked dim while it fastened the bride's veil.

It had never shone so brightly as it did on this marriage morning, and the Duke whispered a word concerning it as he and his bride returned from church.

"The luck is with us, my darling!" he said. "The diamonds shine like a lamp in your hair."

"The luck is with me, I think," she replied gently. "Is it wicked to be so very happy, I wonder?"

He laughed and caressed her, and said he did not believe anyone could be too happy in this world. And, indeed, there seemed no flaw in their joy—no serpent in their Eden as they started together on the great journey of life.

Their honeymoon was to be spent in travel.



ling. Thirlford was to be ready for them when the Duke had shown his bride some of the loveliest spots in England and Scotland. She had not had time as yet to travel very extensively, and she preferred making the acquaintance of her own country first, she said, when he offered to take her abroad and show her Switzerland and Italy.

So they journeyed to Scotland together and took up their quarters for a few days at the foot of Ben Lomond, making excursions from thence to all that the neighbourhood had to show.

Mildred was piloted to the very top of the mountain, and astonished the guides by her strength and agility. They did not know of her out-of-door training at the Antipodes, and thought her a marvel among women. The Duke laughed at her, and admitted that she was more than a match for him.

After their return from the expedition up the mountain, which the Duchess persisted in calling a hill, the Duke was aware of a man staring in at the window of their private sitting-room from the terrace outside. The window was open, and he asked him somewhat sharply what he wanted.

"No offence, sir," the man replied, in an English voice. He was not from the neighbourhood evidently. "I've got round here by mistake, I fancy. I did not mean to be rude."

"Oh, it's of no consequence," his Grace said, good-naturedly. "Find your way back to your own quarters, there's a good fellow; this terrace is private!"

"So I see, sir. Again I beg your pardon." There was something odd in the man's tone. It was not in the least disrespectful, but it sounded oddly independent, and as if there were something behind his words.

"You are a stranger here?" the Duke asked, scanning the man's face, and wondering if he had ever seen it before. He felt sure he had not. It was so curiously scarred that he would have recognized it in a moment if he had been familiar with it. It looked as if it had literally been smashed in at no very distant date, as indeed, it had, the eyes and mouth escaping by an almost miracle. The injury was healed, but the nose was gone, and the cheeks terribly scarred; and the face altogether was calculated to give any sensitive person a shock at the first sight of it.

"Yes," the man replied; "I am a stranger here. I only landed in England a week ago."

"Where from?"

"Australia! I came to seek something I have lost."

"And that is?"

"My wife!"

The Duke was sorry he had asked the question. He had done so in an unthinking fashion, and with no intent to touch on anything that did not concern him.

"I—I beg your pardon," he said, in confusion. "I did not know, did not think what I was saying."

"Of course you did not know; how should you. But it's a fact—it is my wife I am looking for."

"And do you expect to find her here?"

"I rather think so. What is your name?"

"That is rather an abrupt question, but it is no secret here. I am the Duke of Thirlford!"

"You?"

"Yes."

"The newly-married nobleman—the mine of wealth that everybody is talking about. To think that you and I should meet!"

"There is nothing surprising in people meeting in public hotels. Perhaps you will tell me what your name is, and then have the goodness to leave me to myself. As I said, this terrace and the rooms looking on it are mine so long as I stay here and pay for them, and I am not in the mood for visitors to-night."

The man laughed shortly.

"I have no wish to intrude, my lord Duke,"

he said. "I cannot offer you my card; such things are not fashionable in the society of which I am an ornament. But I will tell you my name. It is Paul Clintock; your Grace will do well to remember it. You will hear it again."

"Now I should say that fellow is a mad-man," the Duke said to himself as he watched, his visitor walk rapidly away. "Paul Clintock! Where have I heard that name before, and recently too?"

He could not recall where. His father-in-law had mentioned it; but the occasion had been trivial, and left no impression on his mind. He never dreamed of connecting Mildred with it in any way.

"What are you thinking of, and what was going on here just now?" his wife presently said, coming in and putting her two hands round his neck from behind. "I heard you talking to someone with such an odd voice."

"Was his voice odd, dear? I did not notice that. His face was horribly scarred, as if from an accident; he was a curious sort of fellow, I fancy a character. What are you thinking of, Duchess?"

"I hardly know." She had come round in front of him now, and was looking him straight in the face. "An odd feeling that I had as I sat up there—I was just over your head, my lord Duke—that the voice was familiar to me. I can't think where or when I could have heard it before."

"Nowhere I should say, dear. He did not look like a man who would cross your path."

"Queer people crossed my path in Australia," she said, with a little laugh. "What did he want here under our windows?"

"He had blundered here somehow," the Duke said. "He had just come from Australia. I think he said he was in search of something he had lost."

"Did he tell you what it was?"

"Yes, his wife."

"His wife! Does he expect to find her here in the wilds of Scotland?"

"I suppose so. He asked my name, and then favoured me with his, and went away. I think he said I should hear his name again, or something of that sort."

"And what is it? He must be a rude person."

"His manner was scarcely rude, but it was unmistakably odd. His name is Paul Clintock."

"What?"

The words came in a sort of gasp, she could hardly force it from her white, trembling lips.

"Paul Clintock!"

"Alive!"

"He was certainly too substantial for a ghost. Why, Mildred, my darling, what have —"

He did not finish his sentence. Mildred looked at him with wild, glassy eyes, and then putting out her hands as if to ward off a blow, gasped out "No, no!" and fell white and insensible at his feet.

Terribly frightened he rang the bell violently, and the servants came trooping in, and Mildred was conveyed to her room. Her swoon did not last long, and she came to herself, white and trembling, but declared herself quite well.

The Duke could not make out what ailed her: there had seemed nothing the matter with her nerves till this evening, and now she was as weak as a baby, and begged to be taken back to her father's house instead of going on.

"I suppose I am overdone, dear," she said to her husband. "There is such a thing as having too much happiness, you know. I was afraid I was too near Heaven on our wedding-day, Edgar. I told you so."

"Darling, this wild talk," the Duke said, wondering extremely at her. She had changed from a bright happy girl into a haggard woman all in a moment. "Suppose I send for Lord Clever to come here? He will come the moment he hears there is anything wrong."

"Perhaps it will be better," she said. "We

are out of the way here, and the scandal will be less."

"Child, what are you talking about? What scandal is there going to be?"

"Ask papa, he will tell you," was all he could get her to say. "Leave me alone, Edgar. You will soon wish you had never seen me."

"Nothing could ever make me do that, my own darling!" the Duke said, wondering whether she or himself were going a little mad. "I will telegraph to your father, and he will be here as soon as the train can bring him."

He sent the message, and the Earl wired back that he was starting, and would be with him directly.

"Guess what has happened!" the message said. "Have heard from Sydney; will be with you as soon as possible."

Mildred understood the words. Her husband did not, and he could not comprehend her frantic grief, or her shrinking from him and passionate prayers that the night die. It was the most painful day the Duke had ever spent in his life that followed the miserable evening when he encountered the man on the terrace; and heart-sick and weary beyond measure he went out on to the mountain side, and left his wife as she desired, with only her attendants. She would only cry and wring her hands when he was there, and he could get at nothing like an explanation. The man who had spoken to him the evening before, and who seemed in some way to be at the bottom of it all, had disappeared. He had not been seen by any one since.

Lord Clever could not arrive till late in the evening, even if he caught the very first train that would bring him. So Edgar Armdale wandered about with his burden of trouble, the most miserable Duke that ever wore a coronet, and passed the weary day on the mountain, wondering now and then whether he were awake or dreaming. It was nearly dark when he went back to the hotel. The sun had gone down behind the mountain, and the lake lay at its foot, a sullen-looking black sheet of water, curled here and there into angry little waves, for the wind was rising.

Just outside the grounds of the hotel, almost hidden by the branches of a great tree, a man and woman stood talking—the stranger of the terrace! and his wife, the Duchess of Thirlford!

He was not mistaken; he knew the light dress she wore. If it were not some one masquerading in her gown it was Mildred herself. She was sobbing bitterly, and speaking in an imploring voice; the man's was cynical and hard. The Duke strode forward and thrust himself between them. Mildred gasped, and would have run away, but that he held her arm. The man laughed mockingly, and greeted him with an ironical bow.

"Good evening, my lord Duke," he said. "I told you you would hear of me again. I have found my wife, you see."

He indicated Mildred with a slight motion of his hand, and she shuddered in her husband's clasp as she noted it.

"Liar!" said the Duke.

"It is gospel truth," the man replied. "Ask her, she will not deny it. She was married to me, Paul Clintock, at a place called Little Glosop, during a certain journey she made to Sydney not so very long ago. She has chosen to think me dead since then, and to keep the secret of our marriage and another as well, I suppose. The light will be let in on both now, my Lord Clever."

"Liar and thief!"

It was not the Duke of Thirlford who spoke this time, but another voice behind the group; and before he knew what was happening, the Duke saw the man he had been speaking to seized by a couple of policemen, and he was holding Mildred fainting in his arms with her father beside him looking flushed and excited, but in no sort of trouble.

"I had no idea where this fellow was to be found," he said; "or I should have told you

the whole story and warned you. I only had news of him this morning. My old friend in Sydney informed me that a false Paul Clintock was likely to arise. He has deceived some persons—not many—out there, and was known to have started for England, armed with all sorts of credentials belonging to the man he personates."

"Lies!" said the man, sullenly, struggling with his captors. "All lies; I am Paul Clintock. I was not killed, as they think. That woman is my wife."

"Take off his coat!" Lord Clever said to the policeman. "If he is Paul Clintock, as he says he is, his right arm above the elbow has been nearly cut through with a sickle, and there is an eagle tattooed on his left forearm. He will remember, too, what I said to him when he showed me the scar and the tattoo mark. I was surprised that he was Latin scholar enough to understand me."

The man raved and struggled, but he was firmly held, and his arms bared, showing them smooth and guiltless of any scar or mark.

"Take care of him," Lord Clever said, "he is but a clumsy villain at best, though there is a resemblance of voice that might have deceived some people. He is Paul Clintock's cousin, and a sharer in many a piece of villainy, I am afraid. I suppose that smashed face of his made him confident of succeeding in his scheme. He thought to frighten Mildred into paying him black mail."

"You forget I am not in the secret of her acquaintance with him," the Duke said, somewhat stiffly, laying his wife down on the couch as he spoke. "She is coming to herself, my lord; there will be no need to call the servants. It is enough that we have heard what has past."

"There has been no harm nor wrong done to you," Lord Clever said gently. "There is a story to tell you, but my darling's fair fame was never so much as smirched by it. She was a weak girl, and frightened by a scoundrel; that was all."

"But that wretch said that she was married to this Paul Clintock. Married! My wife! My little darling!"

"So she was," the Earl said, laying his hand on his son's shoulder. "She did go through the ceremony of marriage with him as you have heard. It was the price he exacted from her for keeping a secret which he invented to gain his own ends. Our leaving Australia, and his miserable death, came as a merciful interposition of Providence to prevent anything more, or I think I should have killed him rather than let him have my child. This scoundrel whom you have seen must have been in the secret, and has got hold of papers and memoranda to make his story good. See, your wife is looking at you! Forgive her the deception she has practised on you. It has harmed no one. I will tell you the whole story when you have made it right for her."

The Duke took his wife in his arms, and bade her forget what had happened.

"It was a bad dream, my darling," he said, "Forget it, as I will."

"But it might have parted us, Edgar?" she said, nestling in his arms.

"I might not have been undeceived till it was too late. Papa always comes into things at the right minute."

"Nay, dear, it was Mr. Waite who came in at the right minute this time. We should have known nothing but for him."

The whole story of the ring and the bank-note was told the Duke after Mildred had retired, and the Earl and his son-in-law agreed to hush the matter up as far as possible. No good could come of publishing a scandal which would be sure to be magnified into something tremendous by the newspapers; so the man with the scarred face was escorted to Glasgow, and there shipped back to the Antipodes with the comfortable intelligence, as a parting hint, that if ever he showed his face in England or

Scotland again he would be arrested as a swindler and forger, inasmuch as he had signed the name of Paul Clintock to various documents which did not belong to him; and the Duke and Duchess went their way, and finished their honeymoon, laughing in their sleeves at the wonderful stories which did find their way into the newspapers about the mysterious man who had attempted to rob them at the hotel at Ben Lomon. Certainly, the man was a thief, but what he had attempted to steal only the parties most interested ever knew.

[THE END]

## THE GOLDEN HOPE.

—O—

### CHAPTER XXXI.—(continued)

THE looks and tone of the Baroness betrayed a more passionate love for the exiled maiden than she had ever yet exhibited towards Cecile. Her chosen daughter became alarmed, and exchanged significant glances with Mr. Forsythe, who was by no means untroubled.

"I will obey your wishes, dear Lady Redwoode," said Hellice's lover, sympathisingly. "I will search for her, engage detectives if need be, offer rewards, spare neither time nor money, and give myself no rest until Hellice is found. I shall not return to Redwoode until Hellice comes with me. I will go back to Wharton immediately and telegraph up and down the line!"

"Shall I accompany you?" inquired Mr. Kenneth.

"No. My uncle will be my companion and assistant. I will stop for and take him with me."

Lady Redwoode made no protest against Sir Richard's instant departure. Instead, her appealing gaze encouraged him to depart at once. He had not seated himself since his arrival, and he now came forward, took her ladyship's hand, and said, in an impressive whisper:

"Be of good courage, my dear friend. I will restore your innocent and wronged daughter to your arms again!"

He pressed her hand, and hurried out to the still waiting carriage, while Lady Redwoode, a prey to the greatest agitation, fell back in her chair, his last words ringing in her ears.

When she looked up at last, suddenly, it was only to encounter the basilisk gaze of Cecile, whose fixed glance startled her with its full expression of a terrible hatred!

From that moment, Lady Redwoode regarded her chosen daughter with aversion. Her affection for her gave place to dislike, and, though she inwardly reproached herself for what she deemed her fickleness, she enthroned Hellice in the holy of holies of her heart, where Cecile had never yet had place, and began to believe the wronged maiden true, and good, and worthy of her best love. And more, she began to hope, as one hoping against hope, that Hellice might prove to be her child!

With what ardour she longed for the maiden's return!

There was a long and oppressive silence, broken only by the whisperings of the young betrothed couple. Mr. Kenneth sat apart, his round rosy face preternaturally long, and his gaze fixed furtively on Cecile, whose manner had inspired him with sudden suspicion. The silence had become irksome to all but the abstracted Baroness, when the door opened, and Lady Redwoode's solicitor was ushered into the apartment.

He was a tall, thin man, with sharp features, a pair of keen, honest eyes, the air and manners of a man of business, and an expression of countenance that declared at once his unassailable integrity and his worldly wisdom.

He made a low bow, addressed particularly to Lady Redwoode, but meant to include the remaining members of the party. The Baroness acknowledged the civility courteously and desired him to be seated. He obeyed, taking possession of a chair in front of a small open writing-desk that had evidently been placed for his accommodation.

"You have already been informed, Mr. Lally," said Lady Redwoode, "of the reason why I have requested your presence this morning. This young lady, Miss Avon, is my daughter by an early marriage, prior to my union with Lord Redwoode. She is about to contract a marriage with the nephew of my late husband, Mr. Andrew Forsythe!"

"Exactly so, madam," said Mr. Lally, bowing to each of the betrothed young couple. "And I am here for the purpose of drawing up the marriage settlements!"

He glanced admiringly at the pretty bride elect, approvingly at Mr. Forsythe, meditatively at Mr. Kenneth, and then drew forth from a portfolio he had carried under his arm a quantity of paper, a bunch of quills, and a bottle of ink, closely stoppered and capped beyond possibility of accident. He arranged these articles to his liking, dipped his pen in the ink, and then awaited further instructions.

The hearts of Cecile and Mr. Forsythe beat high with expectation.

Remembering Lady Redwoode's lately expressed doubts regarding the two cousins, they did not expect her to impoverish herself in their behalf. But they did expect a gift of Redwoode, or its full equivalent, and the minds of both began rioting in gorgeous dreams of wealth, and the splendours it would furnish them.

Lady Redwoode was perfectly aware of their sentiments, and their eagerness to learn her intentions; but her manner was unusually deliberate, as she said:

"Mr. Lally, you are not here to draw up marriage settlements in the true sense of the term. Mr. Forsythe has an inconsiderable income, of which he can bestow nothing upon his bride. My daughter is entirely dependant upon me, her father having been a poor secretary, and having found use for his salary as it was paid in."

"I see, madam," said the solicitor, with a smile. "You purpose dowering the fair bride, and desire this dower to be insalienable. Is not that it?" and he again dipped his quill into the ink.

"Not quite," said her ladyship, slowly. "I intend that my daughter shall inherit Redwoode—but before we proceed to business, Mr. Lally, permit me to relate to you confidentially the circumstances attending my recognition of my daughter."

The solicitor shook the ink from his pen, and leaned back in his chair, preparing to listen.

"Mamma," interposed Cecile, shrugging her shoulders, "it is not necessary that this person should know our private affairs. I beg of you to let our secret remain so still."

Lady Redwoode did not heed the appeal, but the lawyer looked at the young lady with a sudden decrease of respect and admiration. It was his business to be intrusted with family secrets, and he had long been the adviser of Lady Redwoode in matters where Mr. Kenneth felt himself inadequate. Like the truly refined and well-bred lady that she was, the Baroness had treated him with the most unvarying courtesy, and he made a mental comment now, that her daughter was not worthy of her.

Lady Redwoode proceeded to relate her history, as she had related it to Andrew Forsythe. She detailed her lonely orphanage, her brother's assumption of her guardianship, her acquaintance with Rolfe Avon, and her secret marriage with him, exactly as the reader has been made aware of the facts.

She told of the discovery, the enforced separation, her child's birth and loss to her, her husband's death, and dwelt upon her child's



adoption by her brother, and the fact that he had never permitted her to know, which of the two children was her own. She told how she had discovered the fairer babe to be her own, by reason of its nurse's neglect of it, and the aversion evinced towards it by her brother's wife.

She told of her subsequent marriage with Lord Redwoode and why she had kept the existence of her child a secret even from him. She narrated the facts of her brother's tardy repentance and death, the coming of the two girls, her choice between them, and her recognition of Cecile.

"A marvellous story!" ejaculated the solicitor. "I do not see how you could have chosen between them. There is nothing, however, like a mother's instinct, I suppose. The wisdom of Solomon cannot be compared to that subtle feeling we call instinct. Are you certain, Lady Redwoode, that you have chosen rightly?"

"No, Mr. Lally, I am not certain," was the reply that startled both Cecile and Mr. Forsythe. "I think Cecile is my daughter, because she looks like me. Hellice is darker, and the fairer babe was mine. Still, I am uncertain and ill at ease. My child must be my heiress. Until I know absolutely which of these two girls is my daughter, I shall guard her heritage safely."

"Quite right, madam," said the solicitor. "Where is the other young lady? Perhaps my impartial judgment may be of use."

"Hellice is not at home," said Lady Redwoode, her brow clouding over. "I hope she will be here to-morrow, however."

"She attempted to poison mamma," declared Cecile, speaking angrily, "and I know she is Horatio Glintwick's daughter, and that I am Lady Redwoode's child. My old Hindoo nurse will tell you the same. I cannot understand why mamma is contented one day and doubting the next. At any rate," she added, somewhat triumphantly, "mamma dare not disown me entirely. She will have to give me as much as she gives my cousin."

Mr. Lally considerably bent his gaze upon his paper. Mr. Forsythe gave his betrothed a warning glance. Lady Redwoode looked up, pale and thoughtful, but quietly resolute.

"Andrew Forsythe says that he seeks Cecile from love and not from self-interest," she said. "I have not deceived him or Cecile with regard to my sentiments. They have both known that my mind was not made up as to my daughter's identity. Therefore, Mr. Lally, I shall not wrong either of them by whatever I may do. I desire to add to their income, so that they may live as befits their rank. They have consented to stay at Redwoode with me, making my home their own. Should we change that plan, other arrangements can be made for their future. My gift to Cecile is not intended as a final one."

The solicitor spread out his paper afresh, and filled his pen.

Cecile and Mr. Forsythe became eager with expectation.

"She cannot do less than give me her private fortune," whispered the girl, with bright eyes and glowing face.

"I wish to settle upon Cecile," said Lady Redwoode, deliberately, "the sum of one thousand pounds a year. That, in addition to Andrew's five hundred a year, will be ample for their wants, seeing that a home is supplied to them here. Put it down, Mr. Lally. I have nothing more to add."

"A thousand pounds!" exclaimed Cecile, pale with anger. "A paltry thousand pounds out of a yearly income of twenty thousand. It is shameful. I refuse so small a pittance. I expect ten thousand at the very least. If I were only your niece, mamma, you ought to give me that. You are miserly!"

Lady Redwoode looked at her sternly and commandingly, and she dared not finish her angry exclamations. Mr. Lally, apparently unconscious of the girl's display of temper, wrote on evenly and quietly. Mr. Kenneth watched the maiden in silent amazement.

The document, securing to Cecile a thousand a year was duly drawn up, signed, sealed, and witnessed. Even to the last, Cecile expected that the Baroness would command a change to be made, but as she did not, the girl became unbearably sullen and defiant.

"The business is concluded," said her ladyship, with a sigh. "The young people are provided for; the arrangements are all completed: and we have only to await the marriage ceremony."

She spoke wearily, as if her burden were more than she could bear, but not a smile tinged Cecile's lips, and she uttered not a word of love or gratitude. If she were really the daughter of the Baroness, it was easier to predict for the latter still heavier burdens, still greater trials, in the future.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

I would bring balm, and pour it in your wound,  
Care your distemper'd mind, and heal your  
fortunes. —Dryden.

Thy words have darted hope into my soul,  
And comfort dawns upon me.

—Southern.

MISS KENNETH'S description of Hellice's departure from Holly Bank had been correct. The young girl had gone forth on foot and alone, sadly resolute to find for herself some refuge, where her pursuing fate should be evaded. No one had spoken to her a kind word at parting. Her hostess had followed her to the door, uttering vague warnings, and denouncing her for an attempted crime, of which the maiden could not by any possibility have been guilty; the maids peered out at her from behind the window-curtains, and pitied and condemned her in a breath; the old gardener as she passed him with an inclination of her head muttered that the world was no fit place for one so strangely beautiful, and that he would rather see a child of his in her grave than in Hellice's friendless condition. But not one, not even the humblest dependant at Holly Bank, had cheered her with a kindly look or friendly word. Unconscious of the attention her departure excited, the maiden pursued her way, and Holly Bank was soon left behind her.

It was her intention to walk to North Eldon, and to take the train from that station to the little Scottish town nearest the address given her by Mr. Anchester. The morning was warm, the walk was long, and her travelling-bag, filled with necessary changes of garments and toilet appurtenances, was very heavy. Her mind was oppressed with uncertainty as to her reception at the hands of Mr. Anchester's supposed relative.

What if the rector's widow, she thought, should demand the reason of her homelessness, and refuse her shelter and protection on learning the truth? No thought that the "rector's widow" was a myth entered the girl's mind. Mr. Anchester had been the intimate friend of the late Mr. Glintwick, and, in memory of that friendship, Hellice believed that he was about to befriend her.

She knew little of the wickedness that deforms the world, and suspected no evil at the hands of anyone, excepting Cecile and Renee. She believed Mr. Anchester's proffer of friendship to be honest and straightforward, and she thought of him as she walked onwards with a sense of deep gratitude warming her heart.

"No one can ever find me in that secluded spot," she thought. "I shall disappear completely, and my fate will be a mystery to Lady Redwoode and dear Sir Richard. It will be better so. When time shall have passed, and Cecile shown more of her true character, they will all do me justice. They will know then that I was incapable of the crime imputed to me."

She sighed wearily, and quickened her pace.

Resolutely dismissing all unnerving thoughts, she turned her mind towards her future, and began to picture her probable reception by the rector's widow. The necessity of a letter of introduction from Mr. Anchester to his relative began to dawn upon her mind. She was almost dismayed at the prospect of being obliged to introduce herself, of having to answer innumerable questions, and of being possibly, after all deemed an adventurer.

"Perhaps I had better give up the idea of going there," she said to herself.

She had scarcely begun to entertain the thought when it grew into favourable proportions. But if she gave up this prospect of a home, where could she go? Not to Redwoode. She had been sent away from there, and she had in her pocket Lady Redwoode's stern, rebuking letter, forbidding her marriage with Sir Richard Haughton. Not to Sea View. Delicacy and maiden pride forbade her seeking the home of her lover. She must go to some lonely little village—but her appearance in such a place, alone and unfriended, would, she knew, make her the centre of malicious gossip. Besides, Lady Redwoode would, doubtless, from a sense of duty, search for her, and her search could not be otherwise than successful, should Hellice make her home in a country hamlet or town. No refuge offered itself but London; but from the great metropolis the girl shrank in fear and dread.

She was so absorbed in her thoughts that she had not observed the gradual approach of a carriage over the road, but she was now startled by the near sound of wheels. Looking up she beheld a small vehicle, drawn by two spirited horses, and she instinctively moved nearer to the hedge to allow it to pass. As she did so the carriage stopped, and she realized the only occupant of the vehicle with a feeling of gladness. It was Darcy Anchester.

"On your way to North Eldon, Miss Glintwick?" he said, with a respectful bow and a pleased smile. "I came back on purpose to see you. It occurred to me that you might like a letter of introduction to my cousin, although it is not strictly necessary, for she is the simplest hearted woman in existence. I have written the letter though, and here it is."

He drew it from his note-book and extended to the maiden an unsealed letter which she accepted gratefully. He bade her read its contents, and she obeyed, her pride soothed by the delicate and kindly terms in which he spoke of her as "the daughter of a deceased friend who had benefited him in many ways."

He enjoined the "rector's widow" to show Hellice the utmost hospitality, and told her that the maiden would probably remain permanently with her. He concluded by regretting that he could not visit his relative during his present stay in England, and enjoined her to accept Hellice in his stead.

"You are very kind, Mr. Anchester," said the maiden, as she refolded the letter.

"Not at all, Miss Hellice. I am only trying to repay my indebtedness to your father. You will be very welcome with my aunt—that is, my cousin. She is often lonely in her old country house. But you look tired," he added. "Let me convey you to the station. You should not walk so far on this warm day."

Hellice hesitated but a moment. Mr. Anchester looked at her so kindly and so frankly that she could not doubt his disinterestedness. She allowed herself to be assisted into the vehicle, and Mr. Anchester turned his horses and drove back in the direction he had come. He kept in this course for a little distance, then turned into a cross-road, saying, as he met the maiden's inquiring gaze:

"I am not going to take you to North Eldon, Miss Hellice. The express trains do not stop there, and you will be obliged to wait until evening, or take a parliamentary train. I shall drive over to the nearest town, and you

will scarcely be obliged to wait for an express."

"Thank you," replied Hellice. "You are very thoughtful, Mr. Anchester. A day of inaction would torture me. I should not like to wait at North Eldon until evening," she added, "for Mr. Kenneth is expected then."

A drive of twenty miles lay before them, but the morning was one of those sunny ones that Hellice loved, the horses were spirited, and Mr. Anchester exerted himself to prove a genial and pleasant travelling companion. He talked almost incessantly, recalling Indian scenes and adventures, speaking of Cecile, Renee and Redwoode praising the Baroness, and declaring that life at Redwoode was almost equal to life in Eden.

He had tact enough to avoid unpleasant allusions, even while causing Hellice to look back regretfully to the home from which she had been excluded. He said nothing about his love for her, but spoke and acted as if his affection had been fraternal, and as if he had relinquished all hope of ever making her his wife. There was in his manner a subdued sadness that was intended to flatter the maiden, but it did not obtrude itself upon her notice. It was his aim to win her sisterly confidence in him, and he was not unsuccessful in doing so.

He was resolved to woo her gently, patiently, and persistently; to heed no repulses, but to win her at last, if winning were possible, and he did not allow himself to think of any other alternative. His love for her made him gentle and tender, and no upright lover could have exceeded him in delicate and affectionate attentions.

The drive came to an end at last. Hellice drew her veil over her face as they entered the principal street of a bustling town, although the hurrying people were all apparently too busy to look at her. Mr. Anchester drove directly to an inn, made some inquiries about the trains, assisted Hellice to alight, took her travelling bag under his arm, and conducted her to the station.

He left her in the ladies' waiting-room while he procured her ticket, and then returned to her with the information that a train was about to start. Giving her his arm, he led her to the platform, placed her in a carriage, with special injunctions to the guard to look after her comfort, and said, as he held her hand in a final clasp:

"I have written to my cousin to expect you, Miss Hellice. You had better make the journey leisurely, stopping over night somewhere on your route. Have no fears. You will find a home where you are going!"

He pressed her hand warmly, and stepped back, as the locomotive gave a warning shriek and the train moved out of the station. A look of triumph lighted up his face as he turned away, hastening about his business—a look of which Hellice was blissfully unconscious as she was borne on her journey.

For an hour or more the young girl had the carriage to herself, but after a time other ladies were ushered in, and in listening to their incessant chattering she forgot her own sorrows. She was as yet so unfamiliar with English scenery and English life that she found ample occupation in looking from the windows upon the fair, green fields, the lovely parks, and the pleasant homes, and in listening to the gay conversation of some school girls, whose age was about the same as her own, and whose laughing faces showed not the faintest trace of care or trouble.

When these young girls withdrew Hellice felt lonelier than ever, and the monotonous sound of the wheels, the occasional scream of the engine, the close heat and the dust, became intolerable to her. Her head began to ache with a heavy racking pain that almost blinded her, and she feared that she was about to be ill, her pulse beating so quickly, and her skin being so feverish.

The instinct of self-preservation was strong, although life had lost its charms for her. Early in the afternoon she alighted from the

train at a rural village, which was half buried in trees. A single fly was in waiting for a chance passenger; Hellice took possession of it, and commanded the driver to take her to the best inn the place afforded. The driver obeyed, and the vehicle rolled over a smooth country road, bordered with houses, set in pretty gardens, drawing up at length before a rustic inn, where vines climbed about the windows, benches were scattered before the door, and horses drank leisurely from great cool deep troughs beneath the shade of trees.

It was one of those hospitable inns that seem almost to have disappeared since the advent of railways, and the sight of it gave Hellice a sense of restfulness in the midst of her fatigue and pain. She followed a neat and prim chamber-maid upstairs to a lavender-scented chamber, and sank down upon a couch, her head pressing the pillow with a delightful feeling she had never before known.

She felt with something of terror that all her trials and sorrows had not been without effect upon her physical organization. She felt wearied beyond expression, unable to think, conscious only of a blinding pain in her forehead, and a desire to rest. She felt if she gave way to these symptoms she should be very ill, and she struggled against them with all her remaining strength.

Her first act after a brief rest was to take a bath. She then ordered tea, and after partaking of it fell into a delicious sleep, from which she awakened at evening refreshed and strengthened—in short, herself again. Her clearness of thought came back to her cool brain, and she knew that the fever which had threatened her had been ward off.

She spent the evening in her chamber, slept well at night, and in the morning resumed her journey. Not wishing to tax her strength too far, she adopted Mr. Anchester's advice, and stepped again that afternoon at a little town in the north of England, where she spent the night, continuing her journey on the ensuing morning.

It was, therefore, on the morning of the third day that the young traveller entered Scotland and neared her destination. According to Mr. Anchester's directions, she alighted at a country town half way between the border and Edinburgh—the market town patronised by the rector's widow.

The station was at one end of the dreary, straggling place, but there were no carriages nor omnibuses in waiting. The only vehicle that seemed intended for the use of passengers was a dilapidated fly, the driver of which appeared to have come to the station simply from curiosity, for he looked at the maiden with a curious gaze, and made no sign of alighting from his box.

While Hellice stood in silent perplexity, the train passed on, and she was forced into action. There were two or three idlers on the platform, but their appearance was not sufficiently prepossessing to tempt the maiden to address them. She was about to speak to the driver of the fly, when she observed the approach of a chaise, which was sufficiently striking to command attention anywhere.

It was very ancient, of a dingy colour, and came onward with a loud rattling sound that defied description. Straps and ropes hung in bits here and there like ornamental tags. It was drawn by a skeleton horse, which seemed blind and decrepid with age. The harness of the animal was a strange mingling of leather and rope. The equipage seemed to belong to a past century, like the sleepy, dreary town itself, and its charioteer was strangely in keeping with it in point of oddity. He was a great, overgrown, shock-headed youth, with sleepy eyes and vacant countenance that did not light up into anything resembling an expression, until he had drawn up behind the fly, in what he evidently dreamed grand style, and then he looked around with a smile of good-natured triumph.

Hellice permitted herself to be momentarily amused by the strange arrival, and then she advanced to the driver of the fly, and said:

"Can you take me to a place called the Rookery, some miles from here?"

"The Rookery," repeated the man, "why that be the Rookery carriage ma'am," and he pointed at the antique vehicle behind him.

Then, with an expression of countenance, as if he deemed himself defrauded, he cracked his whip, and drove away.

Hellice stood for a moment, to recover from her surprise, then she approached the awkward youth, who had alighted from the chaise, and asked, incredulously:

"Are you from the Rookery—Mrs. Hartley's residence?"

The youth nodded, with a look of intelligence, and replied:

"Um, I be from t' Rookery, miss. Missis sent me for Miss Gintwick, who bea comin' to visit her."

Hellice breathed a sigh of relief that her coming was anticipated, and then she glanced at the shabby and antiquated vehicle with a look of repugnance.

The youth had sense enough to interpret her look aright, and said, in a tone of mingled shrewdness and cunning:

"Missis was sorry to have to send this old 'pology for a vehicle, but the pair o' grays is ill eatin' too much oats; the blacks has overdone themselves while we had so much company, and the 'Rabian has gone lame in his off fore foot. So t' on'y old Nance was left to come for ye. Then the chariot has lost a wheel, the pony carriage wants oilin', the clearance is just fresh painted, and the dog-cart is rather airy to ride in under the sun. So, miss, I was b'leeged to take this old chaise, which missis like to have died when she seen me fetch it, but it can't be helped."

"Never mind, them," said Hellice, wondering at the number of equipages kept by the "rector's widow," as much as she had wondered at the appearance of the particular one sent for her. "Is it far to the Rookery?"

"On'y a matter of ten or twelve miles," replied the youth, reflectively. "Let me help you in, miss, and we'll be off, for them fellars be a chaffin' at old Nance and the vehicle."

Hellice climbed into the chaise, the youth followed, flourishing his whip, and he set out for the Rookery. They took a course directly opposite to that which led to the village, much to Hellice's satisfaction, for she had no ambition to parade her equipage in the streets of the little town.

The youth proved to be communicative and informed Hellice that his name was Sandy, though he was not Scotch by birth or education, and that he imagined that he had come by the name originally from the colour of his hair. He eulogised his mistress, extolled the grandeur and glories of the Rookery, the number of its retainers, and its general splendour, adding, with a cunning look:

"The servants bea'n't at home just now, though, miss. They be gone to a merry-makin', and missis and I manage things. Missis 'll be mighty glad to see you, for t' Rookery be dull now that the Edinburgh visitors be gone, and no mistake."

From the lad's extravagant descriptions Hellice began to fear that the simplicity which she had imagined to belong to the life of a rector's widow would be here wholly lacking. But she now and then detected a twinkle in Sandy's eyes which led her to partially doubt his statements. She began to be amused at his extravagancies, and affected an air of extreme credulity that flattered the simple-minded fellow immensely and encouraged him to still bolder flights of fancy.

It was a pretty Scottish landscape which they were traversing, but its character, while bolder, was far less beautiful than that common to English scenery. The smooth green carpet-like fields were wanting here, the trim, flowering hedges were replaced by walls and hedges of decidedly inferior appearance, and the landscape lacked the lovely garden appearance that characterises England. Hellice detected the difference at once, but she did



not fail to enjoy that which met her gaze, because fairer scenes were denied her.

She lapsed into thoughtfulness, looking with the eye of a poet upon the rugged scene, the clustering pines on the hills, the houses nestling in the valleys, and thinking that she should like to sketch those simple homes, when time should have healed the soreness of her heart.

Gradually the scenery grew yet more rugged. Bolder hills rose against the horizon, and rills and rivulets ran through the valleys. The old chaise descended steep inclines, and rattled over stone bridges, and the horse then laboured hard to ascend the opposite hill, threatening to give way at every step, and pulling dangerously upon the very weakest parts of his infernal harness. Some miles of this kind of travelling were undergone, and the horse at length halted upon the brink of a hill steeper than any they had yet seen, as if to collect strength for a final trial.

Hellice looked out of the chaise, down into a low-lying valley surrounded by steep, tree-crowned hills—a valley that seemed shut out of the world, a little domain by itself, where care, trouble and turmoil could never enter.

"Look sharp, miss," exclaimed Sandy, marking her thoughtfulness with delight. "It's the Rookery you're looking at. T' Rookery's down there!"

Hellice's gaze grew searching and eager, and from the midst of the green shrubs and trees filling the secluded valley she saw the chimneys of a country house—the house to which Mr. Anchester had sent her upon an errand as false as himself.

#### CHAPTER XXXIII.

Comfort cannot soothe  
The heart whose life is central in the thought  
Of happy loves, once known, and still in hope,  
Living with a consuming energy.

—Percival.

The Rookery, as the place which the Marquis of Anchester had assigned to be the home of his unacknowledged son was called, was situated in the bottom of a bowl-shaped valley, like a pearl in the bottom of a cap. Great hills, that might more properly have been termed mountains, bounded the valley in every direction. A narrow river wound its way down through a cleft in the hills, and ran like a shining thread through the valley, making its way between opposite eminences to the not distant sea. There were but two or three dwellings in this secluded retreat, the principal being the Rookery itself, and the others consisting of mere labourers' cottages. The Rookery, known to the cottagers as the "Great House," was an old red brick mansion with clustering chimney-tops, spreading wings, wide porticoes, and casement windows, whose frequent diamond panes had a quaint effect. One wing had fallen into decay, but the remainder of the dwelling was as sound and strong as when the household fires had first been kindled within its walls.

The place seemed a small world by itself. No echoes from the gay, busy, bustling world outside came to that secluded valley. It seemed almost as if human passions and human cares might be unknown there. The old brick mansion, set in a grove of whispering, murmuring pines, stood proud and solitary, like the monarch of a realm. Its gardens were rank and uncared for, flowers and choice shrubbery growing amid weeds and tall grasses; its lawn was a rugged barren waste, where chance vegetation flourished; and its stony, uneven fields yielded sparingly and grudgingly to the hands of the few uncultured and ignorant labourers who essayed to till the soil.

The time had been when the Rookery was the pleasant home of country gentlemen, who had made it a summer retreat, but its glory had passed away on the day when a daughter of a family had taken it as a part of her dower, on the occasion of her marriage with an heir

of the Marquisate of Anchester. Thenceforth it had been let to strangers, but its retired situation, its loneliness, and its lack of neighbours had conspired against it, and for years its only occupants had been a woman who served as housekeeper, and a lad who has been already introduced to the reader.

The Rookery was looking its best when Hellice first beheld it. The summer sun shone on its windows, making them glitter like diamonds; a few curtains were lazily flapping in the upper casements; and flocks of rooks, whose presence had given the place its name, circled about a ruined, ivy-grown old tower.

Hellice looked at the place with eager interest, her heart beginning to fail her, in anticipation of her meeting with the pretended rector's widow. She did not fail to notice with what pretty curves the little river ran through the Rookery grounds; nor how thickly the great pines grew throughout the valley, growing densest near the mansion; nor how solemn-looking birds with mournful cries flitted in and out of the sombre shadows. The gloom and desolation of the spot, which, a few weeks earlier, would have been intolerable to her, accorded with her present sadness, and she thought within herself that in this retired place she could school her soul to patience and submission, and learn to take up the burden of life again with renewed courage and strength.

The road continued to descend with dangerous abruptness, and had the maiden been less preoccupied with her own thoughts she would without doubt have been alarmed for the safety of the decrepit steed and the no less decrepit vehicle. The lad who acted as charioteer took upon himself the task of soothing her supposed fears, and kept up a running stream of talk, in which he addressed his passenger, his horse, and himself, indiscriminately, now and then railing against fate in addition, anathematizing nature for having indulged in such vagaries as hills and valleys.

The descent was at last made, much to the relief of the patient horse and his impatient driver, and the old chaise bowed along over a stony, uneven road, at a rate that threatened to resolve the vehicle into its original particles. Their increased speed soon brought them to a wide carriage gate, which stood ajar, the hinge being broken, and Sandy turned from the road which continued to traverse the valley, and entered upon an old grass-grown carriage drive bordered with tall green trees. The drive led by a wide sweep up to the front portico of the mansion, and Sandy, with many flourishes of his whip and a general air of satisfaction, pulled up at their goal, stopping with an abruptness that was actually startling.

Without waiting for his assistance Hellice sprang out upon the portico, every limb acting from her cramped position and at the incessant shaking she had received. The front windows of the house were open, giving the place a look of occupancy, strongly in contrast with the neglect of the grounds. The young girl hesitated whether to ascend the steps and knock for admittance, or to beat a retreat now at the last moment, as her girlish timidity inclined her to do, but while she hesitated a woman's figure appeared in the open doorway, and a woman's face looked upon her with a welcoming smile.

With a lighter heart Hellice ascended the steps, and the chaise rattled away to its own domain.

The woman gave Hellice a quick, scrutinizing glance, and then extended her hand, saying:

"You are Miss Glinwick, of course. Welcome to the Rookery, my dear. I am Mrs. Hartley, and I do not doubt but that we shall be friends."

This frank address inspired Hellice with courage, and she looked up with a grateful smile.

The face and figure that met her gaze were not exactly what she had expected to behold

in "the rector's widow," but they nevertheless were very satisfactory.

Mrs. Hartley appeared a very respectable, and what is termed "lady-like woman," and her dress of black alpaca was irreproachable. She was not tall, but nature had made up for its niggardliness in the matter of length by giving her extraordinary breadth. Her shoulders were broad and massive, her wrist large and full, and she walked like one who has a heavy load to carry about her movements being slow, and her step heavy and ponderous. Her face was round and full, and of equal redness in every feature. The expression of her countenance was self-satisfied and complacent, and she seemed desirous of winning the friendship of her young guest.

"Come into the drawing room, my dear Miss Glinwick," she said, taking Hellice's arm within her own, and leading her through a wide hall into a low, old-fashioned drawing-room, upon whose broad hearth a wood fire sparkled and crackled. "Take this armchair by the fire. The morning is almost sultry, I know, but I had a letter from Mr. Anchester yesterday, in which he says you are but recently come from India, and that I must be sure to keep the old house warm and sunny, else you will be homesick. The house is a little damp, I think, and even I do not find the fire unpleasant."

As she spoke, she gently removed Hellice's hat and cloak, and took from her her travelling bag, of which she still unconsciously retained possession.

The maiden leaned back in her chair, with a pleasant sense of restfulness, and glanced around the room. It was a pleasant one, with casement windows ajar, white muslin curtains fresh from the laundry, an old and worn, but still bright carpet upon the floor, and chairs and couches newly covered with a small, gaily-patterned chintz. It lacked the grandeur and stateliness of the Radwood drawing-room, or the cosy home-likeness of Holly Bank, but it had attractions of its own, and Hellice liked it all the better, because it did not remind her of anything she had known.

"Shall I not show you up to your room, Miss Glinwick?" asked Mrs. Hartley, interrupting her guest's survey of the apartment. "Your breakfast is almost ready, and you may wish to make your toilet first."

Hellice assented, and was shown upstairs to a front chamber, Mrs. Hartley acting the part of cocoon with considerable pride. The room was pretty and bright, with a small wood fire, open windows, and fluttering white muslin curtains, like the drawing room below, but the furniture here was new. Instead of the tall four-post bedstead that might have been expected, a low French bed, draped in white, stood near the centre of the room. A new, small-patterned carpet covered the floor, and a luxurious rag lay in front of the shining fender. A large easy chair stood at the corner of the fireplace, and close beside it was a pretty little work table, the baskets filled with working materials surmounted by a tiny gold thimble. There were hanging shelves filled with books, several engravings on the walls, and a few vases of flowers on the carved wooden mantelpiece.

Mrs. Hartley did not think it necessary to state that the room had been furnished anew on the previous day, and that Darcy Anchester himself had brought and arranged the furniture to suit himself.

"Can you find your way back to the drawing-room?" inquired Hellice's hostess, as she turned to go. "The truth is, Miss Glinwick, I am my own cook and housemaid. I have the service of one of the labourers' wives, and Sandy, the lad who brought you from the station, is of considerable use to me; but I have many duties to perform which I never leave to others. I shall, therefore, be obliged to leave you much to yourself, but I trust you will soon feel quite at home."

Hellice smiled involuntarily, and her hostess read her smile aright.

"Sandy has been giving off some of his

boasts about a grand establishment, I daresay," she said, good-humouredly. "That lad can't be cured of telling falsehoods, Miss Glintwick. He's a poor, half-witted lad at the best, but he has got hold of a lot of old novels which have turned the few brains he ever did have. He has a fixed belief that he is a lost heir, or was changed in his cradle, when everybody knows that he is a pauper whom I picked up in Manchester, and that his father is at this very moment breaking stones, picking oakum, or doing some such thing out in Australia, where he was sent for life. But Sandy won't listen to reason, and he expects to be hailed before long as 'prince' somebody or other. But I am detaining you. Come down as soon as you are ready for your breakfast."

She retreated, closing the door behind her, and Hellice hastened to arrange her toilet. A pretty white-draped toilet-table presented a paraphernalia of brushes, fresh water, soaps and towels, and the maiden soon removed from her person the dust of travel, and restored her complexion to its pristine purity. Her dark waves of perfumed hair were brushed into soft smooth curls; her black silk travelling dress was renovated by the skilful use of a clothes-brush; a fresh collar and cuffs and a scarlet ribbon run through her hair gave grace and lightness to her otherwise severe attire.

Her toilet completed, she descended to the drawing-room, where she was soon joined by Mrs. Hartley, who conducted her to a small breakfast-room, where a tempting repast awaited her. They sat down together at the table, and the hostess attended sedulously to the wants of her guest, pressing upon her dainty meats, broiled chickens, toasted muffins, and other delicacies.

Had Hellice been better versed in society and the ways of the world, she would have remarked that the bearing of the woman was obsequious rather than friendly, and that she looked up to her guest as to a superior, rather than regarding her as an equal.

In truth, Mrs. Hartley was only the housekeeper of the Rookery. She had been the daughter of a small farmer, whose ambition had caused him to educate his daughter beyond his station, and instead of rewarding her parent's self-denial by a marriage with some wealthy gentleman, as he had hoped and expected, she had eloped with one of his farm labourers, a worthless, ignorant fellow, of whom she had become tired in a month. Her father discarded her and cast her off, and when years later, her husband lost his life in a drinking bout, Mrs. Hartley sought a relative who farmed the Rookery lands, and by his influence she obtained the post of housekeeper at the "great house," her duties being to look after the dwelling and prevent by reasonable care its premature decay. She had held her post for years, and she hoped to occupy it for the remainder of her days. Lord Anchester had told his son of her existence, and in giving him the use of the place had urged him to retain her services.

This information Mr. Anchester had turned to his own purpose, representing the housekeeper as a relative and owner of the Rookery.

After bidding Hellice adieu, Mr. Anchester hastened on by an express train to Scotland, purchased new furniture at the sleepy little town at which the maiden had alighted, and had hurried on with it to the Rookery, where his arrival had created great consternation. He exhibited to Mrs. Hartley a letter from the Marquis, bidding her obey his "young relative" as her master, and to show him all due respect on pain of dismissal. Mrs. Hartley became at once Mr. Anchester's slave. Her new master informed her that he had recently come from India, that he loved desperately a friendless innocent girl, whom he wished to make his wife, but who had refused him, and that this girl was coming to the Rookery in the hope of protection from his cousin, a "rector's widow."

He excited the housekeeper's womanly sympathy with his unrequited love, played upon her fears of being expelled from a comfortable home, bribed her with promises of large sums of money, in the event of his marriage with Hellice and, won her consent to play the part arranged for her.

He then prepared her for that part by careful rehearsals, gave her complete instructions on every point, and felt assured that he had secured a most able and efficient coadjutor in his designs. He had remained at the Rookery until the evening previous to Hellice's arrival, and had then departed, promising to return as soon as he deemed his appearance desirable.

The natural instincts of the dependant prompted the widow to an obsequious demeanour towards Hellice. She could not be free, careless and independent when she knew that the maiden might be her future mistress, and her manner became in consequence a curious mixture of respect, servility, protecting kindness, and deprecating humility.

As we have said, Hellice did not analyse that manner, and comforted herself as a guest, not quite certain of her footing. As soon as the meal had been concluded Mrs. Hartley led the way back to the drawing-room, the labourer's wife of whom she had spoken undertaking the task of restoring the breakfast-room and table to order.

Hellice resumed her seat by the fire and shaded her face with a hand-screen, while the widow sat down at a little distance, with an involuntary look of deprecation at her own presumption in doing so uninvited.

There was a brief silence, and then the maiden said, suddenly:

"Mrs. Hartley, I had forgotten to present to you my letter of introduction. There it is," and she handed her hostess the miserable mockery of a letter which Mr. Anchester had given her. "Mr. Anchester is kind enough to recommend me to your protection. He knew me in India. My father was his intimate friend. I am an orphan, Mrs. Hartley, and have sore need of kindness. If you will grant it me for your cousin's sake you will have no cause to regret it."

She looked up with an appealing glance that made the housekeeper thoroughly uncomfortable. To conceal her awkwardness, the widow opened the letter and read it through gravely, saying, when she had finished:

"Mr. Anchester said—that is, wrote the same to me by post, Miss Glintwick. I shall be only too happy to give you my protection. The Rookery is a quiet spot, and I trust you may be happy here. You must consider the place your own, and I shall be only too glad to obey your orders—I mean, to consider your wishes," and Mrs. Hartley spoke confusedly, conscious that she had nearly betrayed herself.

Hellice's countenance betrayed surprise, but she was too well-bred to make any remark. But she answered firmly:

"You are too kind, Mrs. Hartley. I cannot consider the Rookery mine, and it is for me to consider your wishes. I am poor and friendless. I have only a hundred pounds a year with which to support myself. I must do something for my living, and Mr. Anchester led me to believe that you would engage me as your companion. He said that you were often lonely, and that you would be glad of youthful society."

"That is true, Miss Glintwick," said the housekeeper, with a sudden feeling of helplessness. "I am often lonely, but oh, dear me. To think of having a companion—I—I beg your pardon. I feel quite bewildered."

She struggled hard to keep down the housekeeping feeling, and to take up again the rôle of "rector's widow," but was soon successful enough to be able to say, while marvelling at her own audacity:

"What can you do, miss? What are the duties of a companion?"

"I am sure I don't know," answered Hellice, *naturally*. "I fear, Mrs. Hartley, that I

am a very useless member of society. You know, I daresay, that Indian life is not favourable to active and useful habits. I can play, I can sing, draw, dance, and embroider all sorts of impossible animals in Berlin wools upon canvas. But I am not familiar with any other use of a needle. If my accomplishments can be made useful I shall be glad to hear it."

"You know enough, miss," said the housekeeper, approvingly, full of admiration for the lovely young creature. "Young ladies don't require to know how to do plain needlework, darning and so on."

"I daresay I can do all that if it be necessary," said Hellice, brightly, "but I own frankly that I shouldn't like to try. My life has been spent among books, pictures, and music—"

"And quite right too, Miss Glintwick," declared the housekeeper, as Hellice paused in retrospective thought. "A delicate young thing like you is not meant for work or the coarse realities of existence. There are flowers and herbs in the vegetable world, and it's the same with people. You are a flower meant to brighten, bless and shed sweetness and fragrance, and I—if I may be allowed to compare myself to you—am like a herb, homely but useful, yet not more so in my way than you are in yours."

"Thank you, Mrs. Hartley," said Hellice, with one of her rare, warm smiles, yet wondering within herself at the humility of her hostess. "How can I make myself useful to you?"

The housekeeper had expected this question, and had learned beforehand a polite and suitable answer to it. But Hellice, with her sunny face and winning ways, had touched her heart, and she answered energetically:

"By being yourself, miss—by dancing, singing, and drawing when you like to do so, and by being grave when you like. I shall be glad to have you here, and will wait on you and look after you with the greatest pleasure in the world. I insist upon doing so. It will be reward enough for all my trouble to see your sweet face at my table and in these old rooms."

"But that would not be a fair compact," declared Hellice, her red mouth forming itself into an expression of resoluteness. "I am not the useless creature you think me, Mrs. Hartley. I was not made entirely for ornament, like a Dresden vase," and she smiled again. "I will play and sing to you, cover your walls with pictures, read aloud poems and histories, and embroider you anything you like. Will that please you?"

"Oh, yes, of course!" returned the housekeeper, uneasily, disturbed at the prospect before her of listening to poems and snatches of history, and not entirely certain which of the two branches of study she hated most. "It will be a rare pleasure, miss, but I shall dislike to trouble like that. I don't read much, but when I do, I generally want livening up, so I read 'Fox's Book of Martyrs,' or the 'National Almanac,' or perhaps look into Sandy's novels, which do sometimes make an evening pass quickly."

It was settled, then, that Hellice was to do as she pleased—sing when she was merry, look serious when she was sad, read when she liked, and draw when she fancied that employment. In short, she was to have the most complete liberty, to be, without knowing it, mistress of the house, and to abate nothing of her sweet girlish dignity, which protected her from undue familiarity, as the thorn protects the rose.

Mrs. Hartley was by no means a bad woman. She had not been so completely blinded by Mr. Anchester as to deem him perfect. With a woman's keen tuition she had read that he was not all good, true, nor honourable, but she had also read that he loved Hellice sincerely, and, as has been said, she sympathized with his love. The marquis's letter quieted any fears she might have entertained concerning her duty or wisdom in obeying Mr. Anchester. She had now become



interested in Hellice, and pitied her friendless condition. It seemed to her highly desirable that one so young and lovely should find shelter and protection in a husband's love, and she was resolved to spare no pains to induce her guest to think kindly and favourably of Mr. Anchester's suit.

"He'll find me true to him," she thought, "and if he does win her I shall be made a rich woman. I wonder if my relations would take me back then," and a little thrill of triumph rose within her heart. "It all depends upon this young girl, and I am sure I can mould her as I wish."

She looked at her guest narrowly and unnoticed, and somewhat modified her opinion as she marked the earnest face, the sad, resolute eyes, the sweet, tender, yet firm mouth, and the look of self-reliance that was expressed from every delicate, clear-cut feature.

"There may be a struggle," she thought. "I am afraid, after all, that I should be but a child in her hands. But Mr. Anchester will be here directly—perhaps this very week—and he will win her. She can't resist his love and tenderness in this lonely place. In a week she will be half mad with loneliness, and she will turn to him for relief as a child turns to its father. I can read a woman's heart by my own, and I can prophesy a speedy wedding."

#### CHAPTER XXXIV.

Tempting gold alone

In this our age more marriages completes  
Than virtue, merit, or the force of love

—Wandeford.

But if no radiant star of love,

Oh, Hymen, smile upon thy rite,

Thy chain a wretched weight shall prove,

Thy lamp a sad sepulchral light.

—Langhorne.

THE marriage morning of Cecile Avon dawned at last—the fairest morning of that fair summer season. A bright and tender sunshine, soft breezes, the fragrance of myriad flowers, the songs of birds, and the murmur of happy voices, awakened the pretty young bride elect from her dreams, and all these pleasant omens strengthened as the morning wore on and the hour approached for the marriage. Cecile, in her room, was intent upon a magnificent toilet, and Renee, gay and loquacious, fluttered around her, delighted that to her was entrusted the honour of dressing the bride. Andrew Forsythe was in his own apartment, questioning himself, as he dressed, if he had done well, and vainly wishing that he were free again. He was not quite satisfied with himself, with Cecile, with their prospects, and he was especially dissatisfied with what he deemed the meagre provision that had been made for him and his bride by Lady Redwoode.

The Baroness, her toilet quite completed, knelt in her chamber, seeking peace at its great fountain head. She was pale and calm, but unutterably sad and grief-stricken. She had studied Cecile narrowly of late, had tested Renee by various skilful tests, and the conviction had come home to her soul with the force of an awful truth—that she had chosen wrongly between the two maidens, had rejected her own child, and taken to her bosom the daughter of her brother. She had learned, too, that Cecile was not the artless, innocent being she appeared, that she had a previous acquaintance with Mr. Anchester in India, and she also learned that Mr. Anchester and Mr. Forsythe, instead of being friends of long standing, were almost strangers to each other.

The actors in the little drama had all played their parts well, but they had not been able to deceive the keen-eyed, heart-stricken Lady Redwoode.

The wedding was to be a quiet unostentatious affair. But few guests were invited, for Lady Redwoode had determined to make no further introductions of Cecile as her daughter,

until her wearying suspense should be in some way ended. The family would proceed quietly to the little hamlet church, witness the marriage, and then return to Redwoode.

The Baroness was the first to descend to the drawing-room. She looked unusually lovely as she walked into the grand apartment, her robe of lavender mohair trailing in lustrous waves after her, her white point lace shawl thrown carelessly about her shoulders, and her pale-gold hair adorned with glittering jewels. Her face showed evidences of recent suffering, her proud mouth was set in an expression of heavy pain, and her deep blue eyes, that Hellice had so loved, had in their depths a bitter, unquenchable sorrow and the tokens of a mighty warring in her storm-assailed soul.

While she waited she walked backwards and forwards, her hands clasped so tightly together that her white gloves were deeply indented with the marks of her fingers. She was impatiently questioning her own soul, arraigning the instinct which she believed had played her false, and striving to read her future clearly—a task she found fruitless.

In the midst of her sad thoughts Mr. Forsythe entered her presence. He was in full bridal attire, and his fresh, boyish face had under its assumed jubilation an impatience and fearfulness that did not escape the notice of her ladyship. She saw at a glance that he was neither happy nor contented.

"You should wear a different face from this on your bridal morning, Andrew," she said, pausing in her walk. "Are you discontented with Cecile's dower? I know you expected more—"

"Had I not a right to expect more, when Cecile is your daughter?" interrupted Mr. Forsythe, his brow darkening.

"But if she be not my child?" asked the Baroness, gravely. "Andrew, I cannot permit you to think that I am satisfied that Cecile is really my daughter. I have not concealed from you, nor from her, my doubts on the subject. I hope you are marrying from love, and not from self-interest, for it is quite possible that my wealth may go to Hellice!"

Mr. Forsythe grew pale and heart-sick.

"But Hellice has proved herself unworthy," he said, with a strangely dizzy sensation. "Even if she were your daughter, and I know she is not," he added, vehemently, "she is not worthy of so much wealth, or of your love."

"Perhaps," replied the Baroness, a look of holy trust transfiguring her countenance, "a mother's love may redeem Hellice, and make of her a noble woman. She has a strong nature, Andrew, and could it be turned in the right direction, she would amply reward my love and care!"

"But you are not certain that she is your offspring," said Mr. Forsythe, hastily, "or that she is even living. I hear that Haughton returned to Sea View last night, worn out and discouraged. His detectives have failed to trace Hellice, and are of opinion that she has drowned herself—"

He stopped abruptly, for a bitter cry, that was almost a scream, broke from the lips of his uncle's widow. She staggered helplessly, and leaned against a chair for support. Yet it was only for a moment that she gave way to this weakness. She recovered her strength and hopefulness together, and said,—

"Hellice is alive, Andrew. I feel it, I know it. As soon as this wedding is over I shall give all my thoughts and energies to her recovery! I shall employ more detectives, offer larger rewards, advertise more largely, and leave nothing undone to discover her. I know I shall find her again!"

Mr. Forsythe's complexion changed to a sickly hue. He tried to express a hope of Lady Redwoode's success, but failed to do so with any appearance of truthfulness. He hoped in his heart that she would fail, and the Baroness read that hope in his eyes.

"If Hellice comes back, then, you will acknowledge her in place of Cecile, I suppose?"

he asked, endeavouring to suppress his agitation.

"I will investigate the matter more thoroughly than I have hitherto done, and act as seems to me right," was the reply, and Lady Redwoode looked at him with clear and resolute eyes. "I feel as if my maternal instinct were rousing itself from a long sleep. My heart cries out for Hellice rather than Cecile. I think that this Mr. Anchester knows something of the mystery, Andrew. I have detected that he knew Cecile in India, that he was the intimate friend of my brother, and that he has some hold upon Cecile. I will bribe him heavily to tell me the truth. If I have read him rightly, he loves money and will betray any secret to which he holds a clue, if he be offered enough payment!"

A cold, icy sweat oozed out upon Mr. Forsythe's brow. His limbs trembled under him, his lips quivered, and he clenched his hands in despair. He knew well that his whole scheme was in peril of frustration, that Lady Redwoode could outbid his offers to Mr. Anchester, and he knew also, as her ladyship had suspected, that Mr. Anchester would sell himself to the highest bidder.

He seemed to stand upon the edge of a frightful precipice from which there was no retreat. He inwardly cursed himself savagely for having chosen Cecile as his bride. He blamed his short-sightedness, his mad folly, as he termed it, in not having foreseen the revulsion in the feelings of the Baroness. If he had only followed up Hellice and induced her to marry him! But it was too late now for repining, too late to retreat from his impending marriage, too late to retrieve his false steps—too late!

Even while he said this to himself with despair, Mr. Kenneth came in, brisk and smiling, his round rosy face rounder and rosier than ever. Mr. Anchester came in behind him, his Herculean frame towering like a giant's behind the lawyer's, his face as dark and inscrutable as that of an Egyptian-Sphinx, although a smile flitted about his lips.

There was no chance of conversation between the two confederates, but Mr. Forsythe promised himself that he would see Mr. Anchester and send him away before Lady Redwoode could summon him to a private interview. In Mr. Anchester's absence lay his only hope of safety.

(To be continued.)

THE Venetian gondoliers have struck, objecting to a night service lately established on the Grand Canal. Altogether the labour market in Venice is in rather a disturbed condition, for the bakers are out on strike, and the waiters threaten to follow suit.

COFFEE-DRINKING AMONG THE TURKS.—The Turks are a nation of coffee-drinkers. They use coffee as the Italians use wine, or the Germans beer. Of course alcoholic drinks are popular, but it is illegal to use them in public. Coffee-houses are as plentiful as taverns in a mining town, and, in addition, itinerant vendors of the drink are omnipresent in the streets. These latter have each a small sheet-iron stove, such as tinkers carry, an iron sauce-dish with a long wooden handle, a bottle of coffee, a paper of sugar, a can of water, a spoon, and a few small cups. When a cup of coffee is ordered from one of these fellows he retires into the nearest doorway and rakes up the coals in his stove. Then out of the bottle is ladled the coffee, previously ground into an impalpable powder, a teaspoonful being taken for each cup to be made. An equal quantity of sugar is added, and the whole put in the saucepan and covered with water. Then the pan goes on to the coals, and is allowed to boil up once. The result looks inviting and smells good, but you feel more friendly with it outside than when you have got it in.

## FACETIÆ.

PRIVATE (arm-in-arm with his sweetheart, meets his sergeant in the garden of a restaurant): "Sergeant, my sister." Sergeant: "I know; she was mine once!"

"JOHNNY," said the minister, rather severely, "do you chew tobacco?" "Yes, sir," was the reply; "but I'm clean out just now; Jimmy Brown's got some though."

TURN, pilgrim, turn; thy cares forego  
And drink thy fill of mirth;  
Man wants but little here below,  
He only wants the earth.

SHE: "Are you going to the picnic on Tuesday, George?" He: "Oh, yes!" She (with feeble indifference): "Alone, George?" He: "No; I shall take an umbrella."

ADA: "Why one of your cheeks is red as fire, and the other pale as a ghost." Ella: "Yes. Harry was on one side, and I was afraid mamma would see us on the other."

WE LIKE TO HEAR OURSELVES.—Although we often hear of this one's or that one's "interesting conversation," the most interesting persons we meet are those who listen while we manage the conversation.

FOREMAN (to country editor): "Do you want the Rev. Mr. Goodman's sermon, 'Feed my lambs,' to go on the editorial page?" Editor (absent-mindedly): "No. Run it in the 'Agricultural Department.'"

ROMANCE INTERRUPTED.—"Dearest, I love you! Only promise that you will be my—" Small boy (under the window): "Game's called, fellows!" Exalted lover (at window): "Say, boy, what's the score?"

GALLANT.—Barton: "I never like to see a lady standing in a road-car when I am sitting." Marton: "I shouldn't think you would." B.: "It makes a fellow feel so awfully uncomfortable, you know."

ON THE BEACH.—Alcine: "Are you kissing your hand to that silly old fool who followed us?" Marie: "He thinks I am; but it is to his handsome nephew, Charlie, who is just behind him. Charlie understands."

"GERTY, did I show you this engagement-ring of emeralds and diamonds that Charlie Brown gave me?" "Oh, I have seen it before!" "Seen it before?" "Yes. I was engaged to him the first part of July!"

THE RIGHT KIND OF A KEEPSAKE.—"You want a keepsake that will always remind you of me?" she said. "I do, darling," he said, tenderly. "What's the matter with myself?" she whispered. There will be a wedding shortly.

The cyclone struck a noted corner loafer in David City, Nebraska, and slapped him against the side of a brick building one hundred yards away. On recovering consciousness the victim threw up his hands and cried, piteously: "Don't, Libbie, don't! I'm going right home!"—*American Paper*.

Two little boys spent a snowy day during the Christmas holiday tiger shooting in their father's dining-room, and as one, making his cautious way among the legs of the dinner table, for the nonce a pathless jungle, was hailed by the other with, "Any tigers there, Bill?" he answered, gloriously: "Tigers? I'm knee deep in them!"

MAXIE was the little six-year-old daughter of a clergyman who had taken great pains with her religious instruction, and had held before her the goodness of the Supreme Being, so that she should have in her mind always His kindness and mercy as well as power. One morning her mother, passing the open door of the room in which the child was playing, saw Miss Maxie standing on a chair before the mirror, with her face close to it, scrutinizing her little phiz with great earnestness, and with a long sigh she remarked, "I don't see how the Lord could have given me such a nose, when he knows how particular I am."

SICK MAN: "Am I to take all that medicine?" Wife: "Yes; all of it." Sick man: "There's enough in that bottle to kill a mule!" Wife: "No, there isn't, John, or the doctor wouldn't have prescribed it."

"I THINK ice cream is delicious, George," she said; "I just love it." "But don't you know that it's very dangerous?" inquired George, uneasily. "Yes, I suppose it is dangerous, but I'm no coward, George."

AFFECTIONATE WIFE (to her fault-finding husband): "John, dear, would you like to be cremated when you die?" Husband: "Who talks about dying! But I'll be calm, Euphemia, and say, No cremation for me. Put me on ice. I've had, and always shall have a hot enough time of it while alive."

SUMMER BOARDER.—"I thought you said there was running water within a stone's throw of your house?" Farmer: "I did." Summer boarder: "Well the nearest water I can discover is half a mile from here." Farmer: "Well, Mr. Peterley, I've known men that could throw a stone that far."

WINES: "I can't see with these glasses." Optician: "Ah! ah! Number two's. You are very near-sighted, sir. Try number one's." Winks: "Yes, number one suits me exactly. I can see beautifully. But, I say, what can I do when I fail to see through number one?" Optician: "You'll have to get a poodle, sir."

A PASSENGER about to leave a steamer and pass muster of the custom-house officers was asked what he had in his bag. "Nothing but clothes," he said. "Look for yourself." The inspector examined his valise, and found a bottle wrapped up in some of his wearing apparel. "I thought you said you only had clothes in your bag," said the inspector. "So I have." "What's in this bottle, then?" "Nightcaps." "Pass on."

A TRAVELLER with a large jug made a bargain with a countryman to take him four miles over the hill. "How much'll you charge?" "O a couple of swigs of the stuff in that jug 'll make it about square, I reckon." After the journey had been made, and the countryman had taken a swig, he said: "Stranger, 'I'm a peaceful man, but if you don't want to be chuck full of lead to-night you'd better find another way to carry yer golden syrup."

"FATHER, I want to be an actress, and play Pauline and Juliet." "But, my daughter, you have had no preparatory training that would prevent you from making a fool of yourself if you attempted to act these characters." "Why, I have watched the great performers, and I know just how they do it." "Precisely; and you have no doubt seen the woman walk the slack-rope in the circus; if you can imitate her at once without breaking your silly little head I will let you go upon the stage, and pay all the bills."

A YOUNG lady was visiting a friend in town who had visited her last summer. "You don't know how I miss our lovely moonlight," said the country maiden. "Don't you think the moon is as nice here as at your home?" asked her friend. "Oh, it isn't half so lovely! You ought to see it—it's perfectly elegant, and makes it almost as light as day." "I did see it last summer, and it didn't seem to me to be any bigger than it is here." "Oh, well, last summer of course it wasn't, but you ought to see it this summer, since the boom struck our place! It is fifty per cent. brighter."

DIFFERENT METHODS.—A reporter walked behind two diminutive schoolboys on their way to school, and overheard the following conversation: "Wathcher teacher's name?" "Miss Samthin' or rather, I forget." "Naw. I mean what's her ruther name?" "O we call her Stumpy, 'cause she's so short." "Does she jaw or taffy?" "Le she taffied yesterday till Frank Gibbs spilt some ink all over her white dress, 'n' then, Gee! y'oughter heard her jaw. Your teacher jaw?" "Naw, she don't jaw." "O jolly, that's great. Taffies all the time, eh?" "Naw, she don't taffy." "Huh! Well, what does she do?" "Licks."

DEACON: "Well, my son, do you see any change in your father since he joined the church?" Boy: "You bet! Why, when he used ter go gunnin' on Sunday he would just t'row his gun over his shoulder and walk off as large as life, not carin' for anyone; but—" Deacon: "Now—" Boy: "Why, he hides the gun under his coat and sneaks out the back way."

KERRIGAN (in the attic): "P'what happened me razor, Julie? It's shkinnin' me, it is!" Mrs. Kerrigan (below): "Shure, darlint, Rosie wuz atther thrimmin' th' goat's hoofs a little. Sorra th' bit she cud climb ter Mrs. Casey's tomato vines nixt dure, without it!" Kerrigan: "All roight acushla! It's pullin' tacks wid it Oi t'ought yez was; but th' nanny goat's milk must be kep' shwate, av me chake kims off!"

HOTEL GUEST: "I don't believe in this modern custom of tipping. I want you to understand that." Waiter: "I've been to school, sah, an' I happen to know there ain't nothin' modern about it, sah. The custom is as old as civilization, sah." Hotel guest: "Oh, come now." Waiter: "Fac', sah. I learned in history, sah, that one time a rich man like you, named Caligula, went somewhere to supper, an' it cost him four hundred thousand dollars before he got through, sah. By the way, sah, all the things you ordered is out, sah."—*Omaha World*.

"I HAVE spent a most delightful evening, Miss Breezy," remarked young Mr. Waldo of London, who is in Manchester on business. To a gentleman far away from home an hour or two such as I have just passed is peculiarly grateful and refreshing." "Thanks, awfully," responded Miss Breezy. "As it is quite early," went on Mr. Waldo. "I would be very glad if you and your mother would go with me for a dish of ice-cream." "Thanks," said the young lady, brightly. "I presume mamma is agreeable, and as for myself, Mr. Waldo, my month is always wide open for that sort of thing."

## PRIVATE OPINYUNS.

Mi private opinyun iz—that politeness iz about the only profession ov humans that i endorse without looking into.

Mi private opinyun iz—that the man who cheats me, iz a good deal mi inferior.

Mi private opinyun of Fame iz—that it consists in being praised wrongfully while yu liv, and being daubed inkorekty when yu are ded, and the very best it kan do for enny man, iz tew make him respectably forgotten.

Mi private opinyun iz—that a bad joke iz like a bad egg, all the wuss for being cracked.

Mi private opinyun iz—that manufakturing phun for other pholks amusement, iz like hatching out eggs—a sober, stiddy bizzness.

Mi private opinyun iz—that originality in writing wuz played out long ago, and the very best that enny man kan do, iz to steal with good judgment, and then own it like a man.

Mi private opinyun of civilizashun iz—that it alwus ends in luxury, and luxury alwus ends in destruckshun. The barbarians have alwus outlasted the Christians. I'm dreful sorry for this, but i kant help it.

Mi private opinyun of dandys iz—that they are morally hybrid, and i guess they are other ways too.

Mi private opinyun iz—that when a man haint got enny thing tew say, then iz the best time not tew say it.

Mi private opinyun iz—that sum men did actually spring from the monkey, and didn't hav far tew spring nether.

Mi private opinyun ov "Wimmin's Rites" iz—that natur haz fixt them jist about rite, and natur never underlets a kontrakt, nor baks out ov a posishun.

Mi private opinyun ov Sektarian religion iz—that it iz like sider drawn from a musty kask—it alwus tastes ov the kask. Those who at last enter heaven may find the outer walls plakarded with Kreeds, but they won't find enny on the inside.—JOSEF BLITZES.



## SOCIETY.

At a fashionable wedding, which took place recently, the bride was given away by her aunt—a proceeding calculated to give old-fashioned fogies quite as great a turn as though the bridegroom's sister had personated the best man. When the world was some years younger the proper thing used to be for a bride to be escorted to the altar by her father, or brother, uncle or cousin, and failing such relatives by the most creditable man who could be found among the family acquaintances. Even at runaway matches, where the pew-opener had to serve as bridesmaid, the clerk acted "father," and a reversal of these roles would have seemed passing strange. To the Queen belongs the credit of inaugurating departures from several old customs (this one among the number), as Her Majesty "gave away" three of her daughters and also Princess Frederica of Hanover, owing, it was rumoured, to the bridegrooms not finding favour in the eyes of the Prince of Wales. Imitation being the sincerest flattery, the innovation has been copied by ladies who either wished to follow the Queen or who were unfortunately short of fathers and brethren. A clergyman, adverse to changes, once ventured to express his surprise on finding a widow officiating at church as the bride's guardian, but was cut short by the assertion, "The Queen gave away her daughter, and so can I!"

LADY HENRY SOMERSET has created a considerable sensation in Worcestershire with her "Gospel Tent" and peripatetic preaching. Her ladyship's discourses almost rival those of Lady Jersey.

The Queen of Denmark attained her seventieth year on Wednesday last week, when there were great festivities at Fredensborg Castle. In the morning a new "Pastoral" was performed before Her Majesty, although she is as deaf as a post, and could not hear a single note. A great torchlight procession was organised by the inhabitants in the evening, and the festivities closed with a *soirée* and ball at the Castle, to which many Russian and English officers were invited. The town was gaily decorated, and a great number of strangers witnessed the celebrations.

The arrival of the ex-Empress Eugénie at Balmoral a few days since was hailed as a godsend by the Court. For though the distinguished widow of Napoleon III. can keep a Great Lady in good humour by endless lamentations over past bereavements, she also makes herself supremely agreeable to everyone else, and when she dines at the Castle the table talk takes a new and vastly more lively character. With her come conversable, well-bred French ladies and gentlemen, and the ghastly atmosphere of Presbyterian solemnity is disturbed as with fresh breezes from abroad.

SOCIETY has lost another well-known figure in the person of Mr. Alfred Denison. He acted as secretary to his brother, the Speaker, and his portly figure, clean-shaven, ruddy, comfortable face and genial smile are vividly remembered by those who frequented the House of Commons. On the death of the late Duke of Portland the Duke's immense London property devolved upon his sisters, one of whom was Lady Ossington. As this lady was a widow, she was assisted in the management of her great inheritance by her brother-in-law, Mr. A. Denison, and in return for his services she made him a handsome present a quarter of a century since. This money Mr. Denison invested in a sumptuous watch—a very musical repeater of the best workmanship, which was enclosed in a gold case literally studded with jewels, and each jewel a picked stone. The watch chain had a succession of black pearls, and the signet was a scarabæus. The inconvenience of this costly whim was that the owner scarcely dared wear the watch for fear of being robbed in the street, and could not leave it at home for fear of burglary.

## STATISTICS.

**POLICE ACCOUNTS.**—The first annual report of the new Commissioner of Police, Sir Charles Warren, has just been issued. It deals, of course, with the year 1886, and in its form and general scope it presents no material difference from those which have emanated from Scotland-yard in previous years, and the points of interest it presents are pretty much of the usual type. The total force now under the Commissioner is 13,804, being an increase of 485 over the strength of the preceding year. It is quite a considerable army; nevertheless Sir Charles Warren makes it abundantly clear that it is rather the virtue of the public than the control of the police which keeps London in good order. The metropolitan area extends over a radius of fifteen miles from Charing-cross, and comprises a little over 688 square miles. Making all sorts of unavoidable deductions—illness, holidays, special duties, and so forth—there are only 8,465 men for ordinary duty, and as these have to be divided between night and day in the proportion of about six to four, it follows that during the day the ordinary beat duty of the whole of the metropolis, with its 688 square miles, devolves upon some 1,478 men. "The average fine for the year 1886," says the report, "was lower by 18½ per cent. than the previous year," and that notwithstanding that the prevention of smoke, as the engineer of the police points out, is now practicable to a very much greater extent than formerly. The property left in public carriages amounted during the year to fifteen or sixteen thousand pounds in value, and comprised, among other things, a bag containing £216 in notes and gold, and another bag containing bonds to the value of £300. The fact that cabmen collectively pocketed just upon two thousand pounds reward for bringing in lost property is an item of the report gratifying in more ways than one; and considering that in 1886 there were 26,320 licences issued to drivers and conductors, it speaks well for the conduct of these hard-working and often sorely-tried public servants that only forty-one were marked by the magistrates.

## GEMS.

LIFE has always action; it is our own fault if it ever be dull.

TIME hath often cured the wound which reason failed to heal.

NOTHING more dangerous than a friend without discretion; even a prudent enemy is preferable.

GOOD-BREEDING is the result of much good sense, some good nature, and a little self-denial for the sake of others.

## HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

**BAKED INDIAN PUDDING.**—Boil two cups of corn meal in a quart of water till it is almost like hasty pudding. Add one tablespoonful of butter, two cups of sugar, three eggs, and spice according to taste. Bake one hour in a slow oven.

**GINGERNUTS.**—Put a quarter of a pound of butter into a pound of flour, mix with this an ounce of ground ginger, half a pound of raw sugar, and a pinch of carbonate of soda. Work into a very stiff paste with syrup—about four tablespoonfuls—pinch off little pieces, and, having floured your hands, roll them into balls, flattening each in the middle with your thumb. Place the nuts, with a little space between each to allow of their spreading, on a floured baking-sheet, and bake in a moderate oven for about a quarter of an hour. The above recipe is for plain ginger-nuts. To make them richer, use six ounces of butter, and place on each a thin and very small piece of orange candied peel or a piece of blanched almond.

## MISCELLANEOUS.

A FRAGMENT of the first London Bridge has been dug up from the shore of the Thames at Botolph's Wharf. This pile was found twenty feet below the surface, and must be quite eight centuries old, as Stow tells us that the bridge was built in the reign of William the Conqueror. Hewn from stout English oak, the pile is still solid and trustworthy, though blackened and saturated by Thames water and mud. Apparently it was an oblong, not a square pile, one side being broken away.

**SWEETHEARTS.**—Young ladies in Vienna, it is said, wear their initials worked in silk and gold on the front of their jackets. "Young ladies who are engaged," it is pointed out by the correspondent who sends this important news, "may wear other initials than their own." Presumably it is meant that they may wear the initials of the favoured suitor. This is a very useful custom. It is not always easy for a girl who is engaged to signify that fact to the world at large, and in particular to those young gentlemen who are anxious to press their attentions upon her. The Austrian fashion will leave no room for doubt or embarrassment. A man has only to decipher the monogram on his partner's corsage and he knows at once whether or not she is one of the "young ladies who are engaged." Perhaps a further improvement might be suggested. In the case of young ladies who are not engaged, might not the monogram be supplemented by a neat and artistic cipher, indicating approximately the amount of their dot?

**AN EGYPTIAN FUNERAL.**—A funeral in Egypt is indeed a strange sight, and the first one the visitor sees astonishes him very much. At the head of the procession marches a corporate body of the blind and a certain number of men, who proceed at a quick step, singing a most jubilant air, while swinging themselves from right to left. Behind them comes the funeral car, or rather a sort of bier, bearing a great red shawl in which the body is deposited. At the extremity of the bier, on a perch, is placed the turban or the tarbouche of the defunct. Two men carry the bier. They follow with such spirits the movement of the head of the procession that the corpse, rocked in every direction, seems to jump under the shawl that shrouds it. The women bring up the rear, some on asses, some on foot. The first row is formed of weepers, or rather screamers, who send forth towards heaven at each step the shrillest tones. The weepers hold in their hand a handkerchief, with which they are not solicitous of wiping their eyes perfectly dry, but which they pull by the two ends behind their head with a gesture that would be desperate if it were not droil. On the arrival at the cemetery they take the dead person from the bier to cast it, such as it is, into the grave. The grand funerals, however, take place with much more solemnity. An important personage is hardly dead in Egypt before his acquaintances and friends hurry to the house; during one or two days they eat and drink at the expense of the dead, or rather his heirs, indulging in the noisiest demonstrations. When the hour of the interment arrives a scene of the wildest character is produced. The slaves and women of the household throw themselves on the corpse, and feign a determination to hinder it from passing the threshold. The lugubrious tragedy is played conscientiously; they snatch away the coffin; they belay each other with blows, and the most violent and frightful clamour is heard. At last the procession leaves the house and repairs to the cemetery, preceded by camels loaded with victuals, which are distributed to the poor, hurrying in crowds along the road. All along the road the mourners and friends of the family fight for the honour of bearing the bier for a moment, and thus it passes or bounds from hand to hand amid the most frightful disorder. The interment ended, every one returns to the house of the dead to recommence festivities.

## NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MADGE.—Certainly not.

MACIE.—At any manufacturer's.

H. C. H.—We do not give addresses.

STELL.—It should be pronounced "Rafe."

L. M.—The lady should take the gentleman's arm.

DOROTHY.—Too unformed. Try to be more decided.

BESS BEE.—Watch the advertisements in the technical papers.

MONA.—Thanks. Work hard, and you will "go on and prosper."

A. W. (Ireland).—1. Certainly. 2. About two-thirds. 3. You would have an excellent chance. Be a little more self-reliant.

F. S. D.—1. The young lady would be a decided brunette. 2. Not without his betrothed's knowledge and consent.

HARRY.—A little dilute gum arabic will glaze shadows, and to make ordinary colours flow easily, mix a little oil with them.

E. F. S.—1. You can obtain all the information you require from the Naval Almanac. 2. Registration or notice is not necessary.

MAGGIE.—Your sister ought to be ashamed of herself. The hair is a very handsome shade of golden brown that any girl might be proud of.

A. M. ROSE.—1. The Ivy means "clinging affection." 2. You have not succeeded. 3. You can get both works from any scholastic bookseller.

ANXIOUS.—There are several such homes, but in most a small payment is required. A list is given in the ordinary books on the charities of London.

AN AMERICAN WIDOW.—You had better tell him the simple truth before the marriage. It will be best in the long run for both, and save a lot of bother.

FIVE YEARS' READER.—As you both agree to wait, and apparently can trust each other, there is no harm done. The photograph represents a nice looking girl with a determined expression.

MISS HERTHER writes prettily. We cannot say what we think of the lady not having had the pleasure of seeing her photograph, and as to the songs, this is not an advertisement column.

ELIEN.—Ordinary sunburn will go away of itself, but you may help it by bathing your face in sour milk. "Millie" is pet name for Mildred ("all peace"), or Millicent, "purely simple."

IDA AND MAY.—The young ladies are pleasant looking, with apparently bright intellectual eyes. May, from the photo and hair, is evidently a blonde, while Ida would be considered a demi-brunette.

A. F. B.—The portrait is that of a handsome girl with a serious expression. You are tall for your age, and may grow an inch or so. You will not cease to grow till you are twenty-three. Good writing.

"A STUPID GIRL."—You are quite as well aware as we are that you acted wrongly, and from your letter should judge that you are more artful than simple. You write carelessly, but your spelling is not amiss.

CISSEY K. P.—1. Fair writing. 2. We cannot say. 3. "Appodigatur," "Arpedgio," "Akakatura," "Frar diavolo." This is as near the phonetic spelling as possible. 4. Study hard the meaning of the composer.

FAIR BOSAMOND.—1. "To take soup" is the correct expression, but "eating" soup is often used. Soup is, of course, not drunk in the ordinary sense of the word. 2. Write again when you have left school, and probably we might be able to reply.

BLUE BELL.—1 and 2. Answered nearly every week. 3. Hazel is the colour of the hazel-nut, a light brown. 4. Try white precipitate power and lard mixed. Any chemist will give you the proportions. 5. Exercise and good living. 6. We cannot add a cubic to your statue, nor any one else.

SWEET VIOLET.—1. Keep your hands as much as you can out of warm water, and in gloves day and night, and above all, do no manual work. They will be white and soft enough. 2. Veronice, from St. Veronica, a native of Verona, in Italy. Maud, "a brave girl"; Amy "beloved." 3. Quite good enough. 4. We cannot tell.

W. T. S.—To cure beef or pork, to each gallon of water add one and a half pounds of salt, half a pound of sugar, half an ounce of saltpetre, and half an ounce of potash. Let these be boiled together until all the dirt from the sugar rises to the top and is skimmed off. Then throw it into a tub to cool, and when cold, pour it over the beef or pork, to remain four or five weeks. The meat should be well covered with the pickle, the quantity being increased according to the weight of the meat used, beginning with from five to eight pounds.

L. D. R.—The Bastille, the state prison and citadel of Paris, was begun in 1639 by Charles V., enlarged in succeeding reigns, and destroyed by the people in 1789. After the death of Louis XIV. it became a common goal. The imprisonment of the king's librarian nominally at the king's order brought to light the inhuman treatment to which prisoners were subjected, and put a stop to the whole system of inquiry which prevailed there. The librarian (Blaisot) was delivered, but the king's minister (De Breteuil) was not punished. Hence the uprising of the people, as stated, and the destruction of the Bastille on July 14, 1789.

M. O. T.—The army of Germany consists of 445,402 men; that of France, 514,149.

F. T.—The official and botanical name of American wild cherry bark is "Prunus Virginiana."

D. C.—Apply sweet cream to the raw and blistered surfaces caused by exposure to the sun, keep perfectly quiet, protect the body from contact with rough surfaces; and should the healing skin become hard and dry, anoint it with sweet oil or cold cream, and allow nature to do the rest.

G. L.—A lady should thank her escort for the pleasure and protection afforded her while in his company, but after becoming intimate friends, this rule need not be strictly followed.

H. D.—The total number of members of the Masonic fraternity the world over is estimated to be about 5,500,000. There are upwards of 12,000 lodges of the order in the United States alone.

W. C. H.—The "Martyrs' Monument" in the north-east corner of Trinity Churchyard, New York, was erected by the Trinity Corporation in memory of the American patriots who died in British prisons in that city during the Revolutionary War.

C. B. B.—Parrots eat but little, of necessity, though they will eat to gorging if fed with various luxuries. Stale bread crumbs, soaked in water, rice, crushed corn, and a little hopped-up may be allowed as a general food, and occasionally dry biscuit crumbs, and a bit of apple.

## FOR EVER AND A DAY.

"She is coming, is coming," the robin

Sang, up in the cherry-tree.

"This the time for wooing."

The south wind whispered to me.

"Tell her you love her, love her,"

I heard the wild-rose say.

"Love her" and "Love her," the brooklet

Sang, as it leaped away.

Oh, the roses of summer wither,

All beauty must pass away;

But true love will last for ever,

For ever and a day.

I cannot tell what the words were

In which my love was told:

I only know that she heard them,

And that my heart grew bold.

I kissed her cheeks' red roses,

I held her to my heart.

Oh, henceforth, dear, together:

No more, no more apart.

Oh, the roses of summer wither,

All beauty must pass away;

But true love will last for ever,

For ever and a day.

O day when I won my darling!

I wonder if heaven above

Will have a day that is sweeter

Or one more full of love?

We have climbed life's hill together:

And so, till the set of sun,

God grant we may journey, darling,

Till life's pilgrimage is done.

Oh, the roses of summer wither,

All beauty must pass away;

But true love will last for ever,

For ever and a day.

E. E. R.

M. S. P.—In regard to the Celts, in Wales, Ireland, and the Scottish highlands are found the most distinct types of those who continue to make use of different dialects of the ancient Celtic language, and who retain many of the prominent characteristics of the race.

D. K. N.—There is nothing that will stop the growth of your too-luxuriant beard. It is usual for the gentleman to provide furniture after marriage, but there is nothing wrong in the lady's helping him. Four pounds a week, with plenty of love and prudence, should secure you a good though not luxurious home.

L. B. B.—Yours is indeed a pitiful case, but for your child's sake it is best to forbear. Do not give your husband the divorce he is so anxious for unless upon such grounds as will leave no stain on your name. His conduct is simply disgraceful, and the woman who is his partner in guilt, unless he deceived her, deserves all that may befall her.

R. P. N.—If any personal injury has been caused by his actions he should be made to answer for it in a court of justice; but the cowardly ravings of a consummate rascal as he appears to be can have no effect upon the spotless character of a woman who at one time confided in him, unless it be among vicious companions who are willing to listen to such scandalous gossip.

L. W.—The flag of the United States is made up of thirteen stripes, seven red and six white, so that a red stripe comes at both the top and bottom, and a blue union, emblazoned with as many stars as there are States in the Union, in the upper corner next to the staff. The law does not tell how the stars (of which there are now thirty-eight) shall be placed, so that in making a flag they may be arranged just as one pleases; but in the flags used by the army they are generally made into one large star, while in those used by the navy they are placed in straight lines. The blue union, when used separately as a flag, is called the union jack. The revenue flag of the United States is made up of sixteen stripes, eight red and eight white, running up and down, and a white union in the corner with the national arms in blue on it.

H. W. S.—A flag twelve feet long should be seven feet wide, and the blue union one-third the length of the flag.

C. R.—Perfect yourself in all your studies, and cultivate ladylike manners and deportment at all times. These are two requisites for admission into good society—society in which both good breeding and innate worth, not outward show, are invariably recognized.

L. L. J.—There is no significance attached to the little white spots that appear on the finger-nails. They are caused by some subtle action of the blood, and very often disappear of their own accord, but cannot be removed by any outward or inward application.

EDIE.—Sugar of milk is a crystalline sugar obtained from the whey of cow's milk, and is possessed of no saline elements. It is generally used as a vehicle for small doses of finely-powdered medicines, but has no marked medicinal action when administered alone.

R. K.—We do not wish to discourage you in your laudable ambition to become a copyist, but are compelled in candour to state that your time can be more profitably employed in first improving yourself in spelling and grammar before making any attempt to get such a position. These two requisites are absolutely necessary to command any degree of success.

N. G. T.—To make home-made wines from saccharine fruits the following is a general recipe: Ripse fruit, four pounds; clean soft water, one gallon; sugar, three pounds; cream of tartar, dissolved in boiling water, one and a quarter ounces; brandy, two to three per cent. Flavouring as required. This makes a good family wine. A superior strong wine is made by adding two pounds each of fruit and sugar.

G. S. E.—The Anglo-Saxons were the Teutonic people who in the fifth and sixth centuries passed over from the territory in and near the Cimbric (Danish) Peninsula to the Island of Britain, then just abandoned by the Romans. They were principally collected from three nations, Saxons, Angles, and Jutes, and the progress of the Saxons after their union under Egbert belongs to the history of England, to which we refer you.

C. S. W.—The tobacco to which you refer, after being cut up, is made into flat cakes, which are moistened with treacle and powerfully compressed. The cakes are about five inches long and one and a half inches wide, and when closely packed in the strong oak boxes in which they are sent to market they form a compact mass, from which it requires considerable force to tear out the cakes. This is called plug or Cavendish tobacco, and only experienced persons can prepare it.

D. T. R.—When the young man feels desirous of asking for your hand he will do so without the aid of any outside persuasion; and should you evince too great a desire to expedite this end the probabilities are that his love will quickly cool, and the long-looked-for proposal will be more distant than ever. The presentation of a "bat-hand" to him will serve as a reminder of the regard you entertain for him, but it is hardly possible that it will cause him to propose at an early date. We have never heard of such articles being used as "proposal persuaders."

DOT.—Stella's starry eyes will kindle with the light of love when she peruses this poetic offering to her worth:

"Sweet is thy face, but sweeter still  
Those features which will ne'er reflect  
Evil designs and passion ill;  
Low artifice, with smiles bedecked,  
Lives not in thee—so pure a place  
As thy dear heart could not abuse."

We would be most happy to apostrophize her chestnut hair and dimpled chin, together with her cerulean orbs, but this space being limited, we are compelled to content ourselves with a general tribute to her face and heart.

PANSY.—If a girl loves a man she should be loyal to him and close her ears to idle reports concerning him. Should this gossip be confirmed, however, beyond all reasonable doubt, then she should withdraw her love. But you, like many another maiden, first give your love, then listen to some idle, scandalous tattle, and break off with your lover. To make matters worse, you afterwards discover that these reports had no foundation in truth, and, as a natural consequence, you wish to win him back to your side. Now the only way out of the difficulty is to write him a plain, open and frank letter, like the one sent us, fully explaining the matter, and we feel sure that all will be well—unless he proves himself to be of a stubborn, unforgiving nature, which hardly seems possible, if your description of him is not painted in too rosy colours.

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††† We cannot undertake to return rejected manuscripts.

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